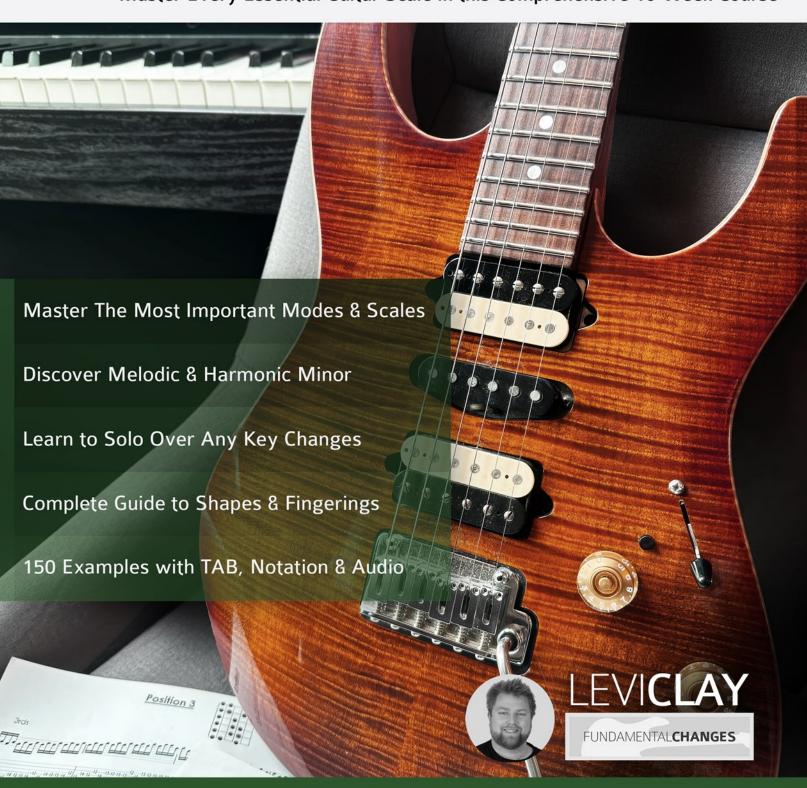
GUIDEDGUITARSCALE PRACTICEROUTINES

Master Every Essential Guitar Scale in this Comprehensive 10-Week Course



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LEVICLAY



Guided Guitar Scale Practice Routines

Master Every Essential Guitar Scale in this Comprehensive 10-Week Course

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Introduction

Teaching has always been a fascinating profession to me. There are so many things we need to learn in this life, and a teacher's job is about guiding us through the learning process in a concise and manageable way.

Unfortunately, that creates its own set of problems! There are many schools of thought regarding the most effective or "correct" way to teach, and also what order to teach things in. As I write this, I have a notebook next to me that I've been writing/sketching in for a solid two months, because I wanted to get this process right for *you*.

Those readers who have followed my writing over the last eight years will know that I tend to write my books in groups of three, and off the back of the incredibly successful *Guided Practice Routines for Guitar* series, I knew I wanted to move beyond surface level material and really dig deep into the fundamental skills of fretboard knowledge and guitar technique. So, the next three books will focus on:

- Scales
- Chords
- Arpeggios

Why are these three things so important?

Music is a combination of melody, rhythm, and harmony. We hear melodies in relation to chords, so we need a solid understanding of those key ingredients. We could describe scales as a horizontal or linear expression of music, while chords are a vertical expression. The problem is, which should come first?

It's a chicken and egg situation. I think of scales as things that connect the notes of chords, but at the same time chords are built from the notes of a scale! In the end, I decided to start with scales, and I've taken this approach because I want you to think of scales like an *alphabet* and chords like the *words* you can form from the letters.

The focus of this book is therefore to give you a real workout in all essential scales, so that when you pick up the next book, you'll be well prepared to tackle the material it contains and extend your knowledge and practical use of chords.

How To Use This Book

This book isn't just another guitar book full of licks and exercises. After an introductory chapter on fingering systems, there are 10 complete week-long routines here, and the goal is to play each one along with me. Each exercise is presented individually in the notation and TAB, but there aren't 120 audio files to download – just 10. What sets this series of books apart from other guitar books is that you'll play each entire practice routine along with me, and this is a proven way of *really* accelerating your playing progress.

On the accompanying audio, I play all of the examples and repetitions while talking you through what we're playing and what's coming next. For the next 10 weeks (at least!), these should be all you hear in your practice sessions.

Over the last two years, the most common email I've received goes something like this:

"Hey Levi, really enjoying the book! I'm trying to spend just one week on each routine. But by the end of the week, I've learned everything but can't get it up to speed. Should I move on or stay on this week?"

I've thought a lot about this and wanted to make it really clear how to use this book, based on my philosophy of practice.

The first thing I want draw your attention to is the difference between *learning* and *practice*.

While you can absolutely use this book to learn about scales, that's not its main purpose. At Fundamental Changes we have lots of books that teach musical concepts in depth, and while I'll cover the basic concept of each scale, I'm writing with the assumption that you already know the majority of scales in this book.

That might seem like a strange thing to say! Why would you want a book full of things you already know?

Because *practice* is not the same as *learning*.

You can't practice a thing until you've learned it. If that's your approach, both your practice and learning will suffer. Instead, practice should involve working on, and refining, things you've already learned, moving them from short- to long-term memory.

Think of a sport like tennis or boxing (both activities I'm keen on!). When I go to my tennis training sessions, I repeat my serve over and over – not because I can't learn anything new, but because I've learned a thing and now need to practice it until it becomes second nature.

The same applies to my right hook! I've spent untold hours in the gym focusing on shifting my weight from the back to the front as I execute the motion. I don't expect to learn something new every time I practice – I just learn a thing, then I practice it.

So, ideally, you'll know the scales contained in this book, so that together we can practice them until they become as automatic as breathing. However, if you've picked up this book and are now thinking, *I don't know the Phrygian Dominant scale very well!* that's OK! You'll just need to adjust your expectations and plan to spend longer on that week's routine to get the fundamentals in place. (One of the core reasons for frustration in the practice room stems from putting unrealistic expectations on ourselves that we find difficult to meet).

If you know the content of a routine, you should be able to master it in one week. If you need to learn the scale, then do so before starting the routine and allow yourself more time. Remember that learning and practice are investments you're making in your future. Taking shortcuts means you'll be short-changing yourself.

Consistency is key. One hour of practice per day is better than seven hours of practice on a Sunday.

I play all the routines here at a medium tempo, but if some still feel too quick, software like *Transcribe!* or *The Amazing Slowdowner* will allow you to adjust the tempo, and you can tackle them at a speed more comfortable for you.

Finally, when I sat down to write this book, I thought about practicing every scale in every key – a noble idea, but one I immediately realised would result in a 500-page book. So, instead, we have a routine dedicated to each scale.

For example, we'll play patterns and sequences for the major scale, then do the same for the minor scale, then modes, etc. The serious students among you can use this material to expand your routines and cover other keys. Or, you can take any pattern you've learned and apply it to any other scale. There's nothing to stop you experimenting with these ideas, in fact, it's encouraged!

So, buckle up... let's talk about scales!

Get the Audio

The audio files for this book are available to download for free from **www.fundamental-changes.com.** The link is in the top right-hand corner. Click on the "Guitar" link then simply select this book title from the drop-down menu and follow the instructions to get the audio.

We recommend that you download the files directly to your computer, not to your tablet, and extract them there before adding them to your media library.

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Primer – Scale Fingering Systems

Many of you know that as well as being a guitarist, I've also been studying piano for years now. Learning the piano at a later point in my musical journey has allowed me to really think about how the guitar differs so greatly from most other instruments.

On the piano, for example, the key of Bb Major is just a collection of notes – Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, A – that's it. When I sit at the piano to play that, there's only one way to play those notes, so not much stands in the way of learning what a scale contains and then playing it.

On the guitar, things are a little different, right? When I listed the notes of the Bb Major scale, more than a few readers will have taken my word for it. As guitarists, it's quite easy for us to play just about anything and never consider the names of the notes involved. Instead, if we want, we can rely entirely on shapes.

This is really cool, because it creates a low barrier of entry for aspiring guitar players. If you can play a Bb Major scale on the guitar, then you can play a B Major scale too. You just move everything up one fret.

A pianist (or horn player, or most other instruments), however, has to know that B Major contains the notes B, C#, D#, E, F#, G#, A#, B. That's *completely* different!

So it's all upside for us then?

Well... not really!

Because the guitar has six (or more) strings, it's like having six little pianos. If I take just three consecutive notes (C, E, G), I can play them in many ways on the guitar. Here are just eight ways to do that and this is by no means exhaustive!

Example 1a



The possibilities of where we can play things on guitar grow exponentially as the number of notes increases. I wouldn't even begin to know how to calculate the total possible fingerings for something like the C Major scale, for instance. Here are just two. One is very common; the other is so obtuse you'd almost certainly never play it.

Example 1b



In order to limit inevitable *option paralysis*, guitarists tend to adopt proven fingering systems in order to learn the fretboard in the most practical way possible. In this chapter we're going to look at a few of those, but I want to address something important first: no one system is "the best" – they all have their pros and cons.

Most importantly, using one system doesn't mean that you can't play something written in another. I want you to take a "system agnostic" approach to the content in this book. The TAB shows how *I* finger things, but I'm not trying to show you the "correct" fingering. True mastery of the instrument means reaching the place where we can play the *notes* not just the *fingering*.

Now, let's look at some of those systems.

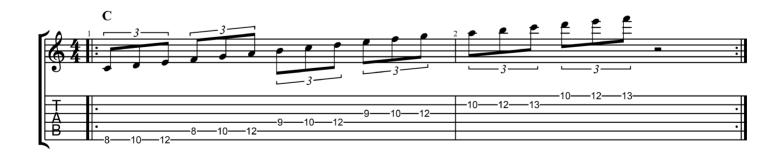
Three-Note-Per-String System

The three-note-per-string system is a method of organising scales with the same number of notes on each string.

This system is popular because it's visually easy to grasp and also has the benefit of consistent string crossing mechanics from pattern to pattern.

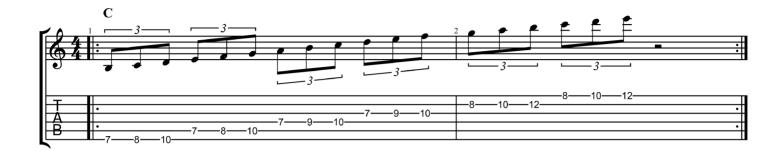
Here's a C Major scale played with the three-note-per-string system. We'd call this Shape 1 because it starts on the first note of the C Major scale.

Example 1c



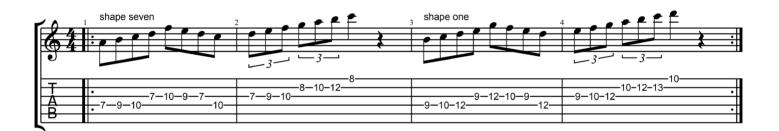
We can start a three-note-per-string scale pattern from any of the notes of the major scale, which means this system contains seven patterns to learn. Here's another C Major scale, this time starting on the note B (we would call this Shape 7).

Example 1d



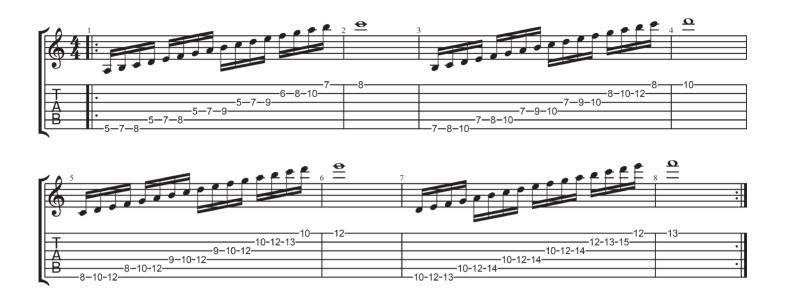
One of the major upsides of this system is that we can take a pattern in one position then easily move it to another. Here's a melody played in Shape 7, then moved up into Shape 1.

Example 1e

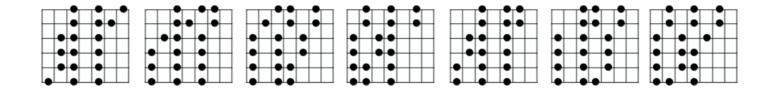


The three-note pattern of this system naturally lends itself to triplet phrasing. For that reason, it's important to work on these patterns as groups of two or four. While we can put accents on the triplet, we should also be able to accent it like this.

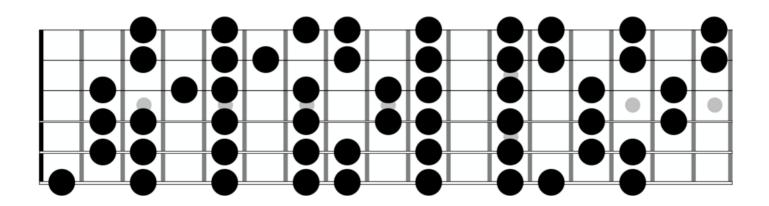
Example 1f



As mentioned, one of the downsides of the system is having to learn seven shapes that all overlap one another. If I express them all as diagrams, they look like this:



Or, as a fretboard map, they look like this.



This is a lot of information to take in, and it can become confusing because of the overlapping and perceived similarities between positions. The only real way to track which pattern you're playing is either to see each shape in relation to a master shape (usually Shape 1) and know where the root notes are in every pattern, or to always remember what number shape you're playing in.

I'm not being down on this system – this is how I learned the guitar and played for many years. I still know this system well, and slip into it when I need to play faster triplet patterns, legato, or ideas that move along the neck.

CAGED System

Coined in the mid- to late-seventies and widely attributed to the teacher Keith Allen, the CAGED system is a fingering system derived from chordal positions, which places an emphasis on harmony and things that are easy to finger on the guitar.

You might wonder, if the system wasn't common currency until the mid-70s, why teachers like me talk about famous guitarists like Hendrix (who died in 1970) being users of the CAGED system when it hadn't been invented!

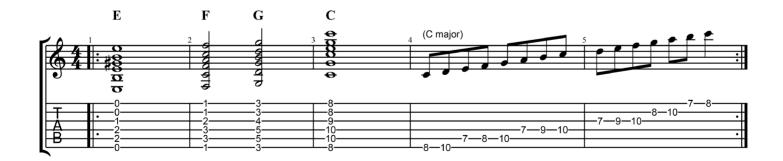
The truth is, nobody really "invented" CAGED, just like no-one really invented the three-note-per-string system. We are pattern-seeking mammals and we like to process large chunks of information in as manageable a way as possible. The observations of Keith Allen were likely not made in isolation.

As for me, I learned a *lot* from players like Albert Lee and Brent Mason. I'm almost certain neither player has ever mentioned CAGED, but they've both described how they see the fretboard and arrange licks, and it's textbook CAGED. It's entirely possible that separate parties will reach the same conclusions independently of each other. CAGED is just a nice little umbrella under which we place these approaches.

The CAGED system is based on the five open guitar chords of C, A, G, E and D, and moves them up the neck using barre forms. These five basic forms create the framework from which scales, chords and arpeggios are built.

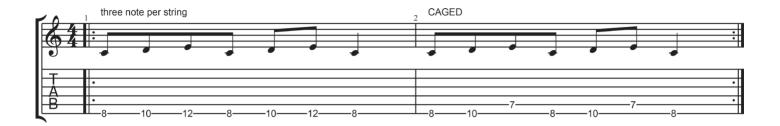
Here's an example based on the open E chord. We move it up the neck using barre shapes to C, then play the C Major scale based around that chord form.

Example 1g



One of the best aspects of the CAGED system is that you'll *never* have to play two consecutive whole step movements on the same string (a key feature of the three-note-per-string system). The CAGED system will never make you stretch your hand more than three frets.

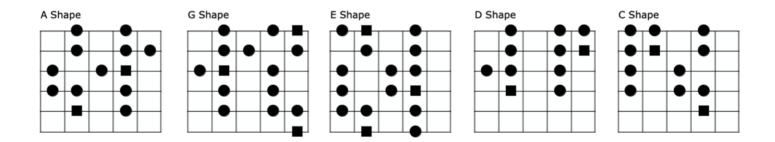
Example 1h



This makes the system *perfect* for beginners, young guitarists, or anyone with small hands, as it doesn't demand the same level of stretching with the fretting hand.

It has the added benefit that we only need to learn *five* patterns rather than seven, plus those patterns all relate to underlying chord shapes, so they are easier to spot quickly.

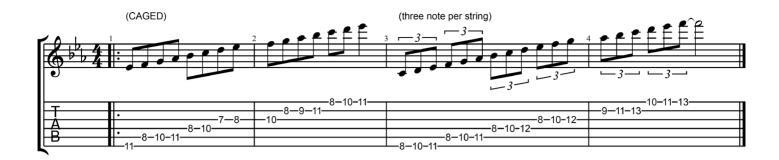
Here are the five CAGED major scale patterns laid out in diagrams.



So, if I'm playing around the 8th fret, and I want to play an Eb Major scale, using CAGED I can quickly spot the Eb root note located at the 11th fret on the sixth string, and play the scale using the "G shape" above.

To achieve the same thing with the three-note-per-string system would require us to shift our fretting hand to a completely different position, or to do some quick mental calculations to slip into the appropriate shape at the right point. Here are both of those approaches laid out.

Example 1i



One of the perceived cons of the CAGED system is the inconsistency of notes per string. Because the patterns aren't organised with playing technique in mind, the CAGED system is a little less suitable if, for instance, your goals are pushing speed and technique to crazy levels.

I tend to rely on a CAGED-based approach in 90% of my playing/teaching when melody matters, and switch to a three-note-per-string approach when I want to inject some speed.

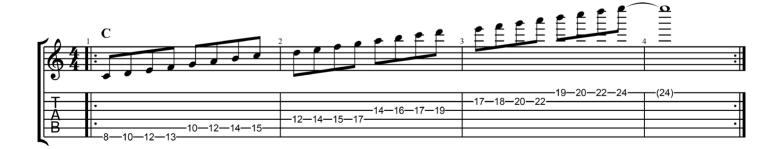
Anyone reading this who has studied privately with me will know that I really use my own little system for the fretboard which could be called ACE, because it uses triad forms that only cover three of the five CAGED shapes. But, I guess that really just makes it a subset of CAGED!

Four-Note-Per-String System

I'm not going to bore you with all the possibilities here, but yes, it's entirely possible to learn the neck with any number of notes per string.

Here's a C Major scale played with a four-note-per-string pattern. When tackling something like this, you could use four individual fingers on each string, but I'd be more inclined to play three notes, then shift up to the next note to play it with the same finger.

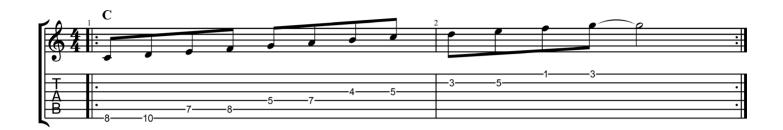
Example 1j



Fingering scales like this creates a tremendous amount of horizontal motion. I don't feel it's very practical in the long term, but hey, if it works for you, awesome!

We could also finger our scales with just two notes on each string, which forces us to move in a horizontal direction, but now towards the guitar's nut.

Example 1k



Again, I don't think this is hugely practical in the long run, but it's entirely possible.

Just Notes

The last option, which is the most fascinating to me, is to not use any consistent system. I've met a few people who play like this, and maybe you're one of them.

The "just notes" guys don't really exist in a pattern-based system. They've either learned the names of all the notes on the neck, or they hear the interval distance between the notes they want to play then just play them. They tend to have had a more classical education, maybe starting on piano, and didn't learn the guitar as much as they just learned music.

Whichever type you are, or if you're someone else, that's fine! Let's take our systems and learn the music. Because you'll find that the more you learn, the more you'll break out of the barriers of your system and become the "just notes" guy. So, let's do it!

Routine One – Major Scale Workout

The major scale could be considered the most vanilla of scales. It's like water. It's the building block of just about everything in music, and the measuring stick by which we compare everything that isn't the major scale.

For this reason, it's incredibly important that we have a deep understanding of the major scale down to the atomic level, so let's talk about it.

To construct the major scale we take a root note and apply a series of tones (two fret distance) and semitones (one fret distance).

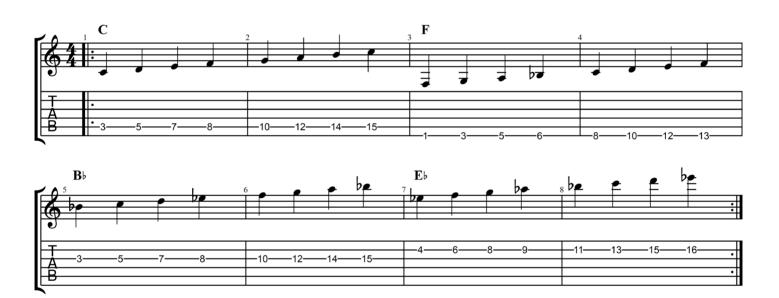
The pattern of the major scale can be written/remembered as:

Tone Tone Semitone Tone Tone Semitone (or TTSTTTS).

Our first exercise is to play this pattern starting on the note C, then again from F, Bb and Eb.

As you're doing this, you should be saying (or at least thinking!) "TTSTTTS".

Example 2a



Why these random keys, Levi?

Well, they're not random at all! One of the best habits I've picked up from learning the piano is that it's good practice to play everything in all twelve keys. On the piano, that's essential, because each key looks different. On the guitar, getting into this habit will help remove some of the fear we might have of playing in different keys.

To keep our practice balanced, we can work our way through the Circle of 5ths (or 4ths depending on where we begin). Moving through this cycle starting on C gives us:

$$C-F-Bb-Eb-Ab-Db-Gb/F\#-B-E-A-D-G-C.$$

That pattern was the ultimate conclusion of the Foundation Level practice routines book, but here we're getting straight into it!

Before we do, now that we have our major scale structure, we can focus on identifying the *intervals* in the scale in relation to the root note. Remember, the major scale is the scale to which all other scales are compared, so it's incredibly important we know what intervals are in it.

Thankfully, this is easy, because we can assign each note of the major scale a number that equals its interval.

$$C = 1$$
, $D = 2$, $E = 3$, $F = 4$, $G = 5$, $A = 6$, $B = 7$.

Let's play the C Major scale from the root note on the sixth string. As we play through it, really focus on the numbers assigned to each note. I'll say these out loud the first few times I play it.

Example 2b



As a further exercise, you can play through the scale and pick a particular number, such as 3 or 6, and as you're playing, identify whenever that interval is played. Remember, we're challenging the brain, not just the fingers.

Now let's play the same major scale, this time starting with our first finger on the fifth string.

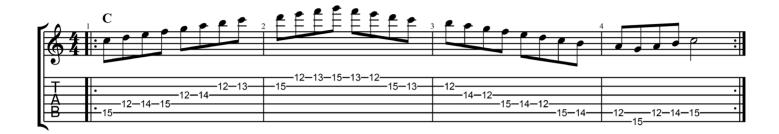
Example 2c



I like to think of these as "forward shapes". I.e., I have a root note and all my notes are in front of that note. My focus is being able to see the root note and build the scale shape around it. So, no matter what major scale I want to play, I can simply move my first finger to that note on the sixth or fifth string, and the scale shape will fit around it.

I also want to be able to do the same with a "backwards shape" – one where I play the root note and all the other scale notes are behind it. For example, here I'm playing a "C shape" C Major scale. The root note is played on the fifth string from my fourth (pinkie) finger.

Example 2d



I could do the same thing on the sixth string too, which would look like this.

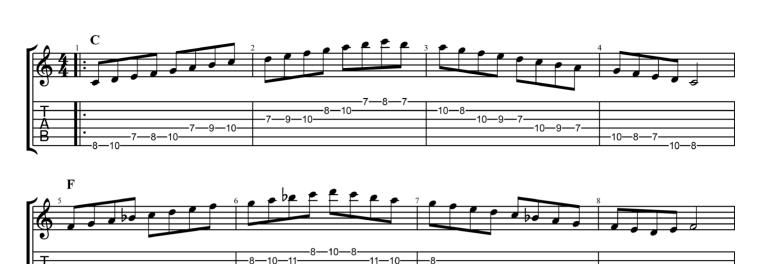
Example 2e



I can't stress enough that unless you *know* the last few examples, playing the next example will be hard work, so don't rush ahead. When playing scales through 12 keys, you can't possibly memorise the exercise as dozens of separate notes. While I'm playing the C Major scale, I'm looking at the fretboard to locate the F note I'll be targeting. And when I'm playing F Major, I'm looking for the Bb, and so on.

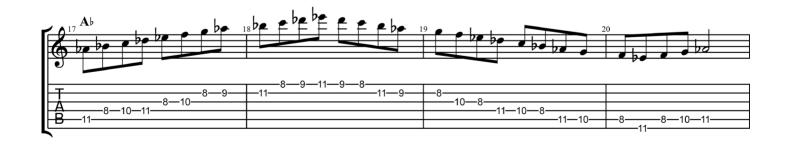
It doesn't matter if you don't play the same patterns as me – the exercise is just designed to help you practice thinking ahead.

Example 2f









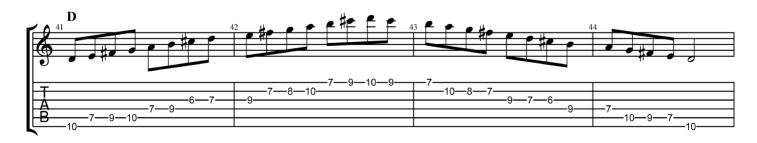














Wow, that was one hell of a workout! Where do we go from here? Well, scales are not always played in ascending fashion from the root note, so now we'll challenge ourselves by looking at the scale in descending form.

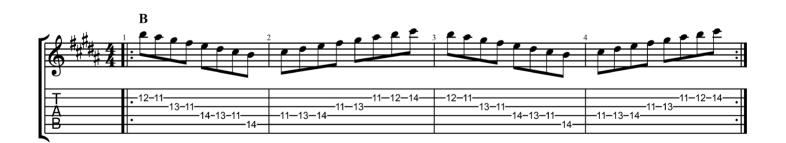
We'll mix things up a little by doing this in A Major with the root note on the first string. We won't descend to the root on the low string here, we'll keep to the top four strings.

Example 2g



Here's another descending scale, this time in the key of B, with the root note on the second string.

Example 2h



Now let's play another descending major scale, this time in the key of E, with the root note on the first string, played with the fourth finger.

Example 2i

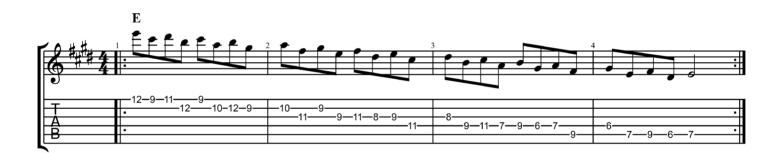


I'm a huge fan of working sequence pattens through scales as a way to keep our technique sharp, but also to mix up and explore some of the melodic capabilities of the scale pattern.

Sticking with the previous position, this time we'll start with the E root note, then skip down a third to C#, then move up a scale step to D#, then down a third to B, up a scale step to C#, then down a third to A, and so on.

This sequence of thirds is wonderfully musical!

Example 2j



You may have noticed that we broke out of position a little when playing the previous example, and moved down the neck by playing four notes on the fourth string. Being comfortable with position shifts like this is a great way to keep exploring the fretboard.

Here's another example of that in C, transitioning from the "A shape" up to the "G shape".

Example 2k



I took a mind-bending way to practice this idea from the incredible Carl Verheyen. Here, we'll start down in F on the sixth string and play an ascending major scale all the way up the neck until we can't go much further. There are obviously limitless pathways to achieve this, and the exercise is really about looking for new ways each time you try it, but here's a good start.

Example 21



Now let's do that in Bb.

Example 2m



You know where I'm going with this! Carl will do this as a warmup in all twelve keys, ascending and descending. For the sake of saving the rainforest, I won't write out the whole thing, but it's something you should absolutely take a stab at.

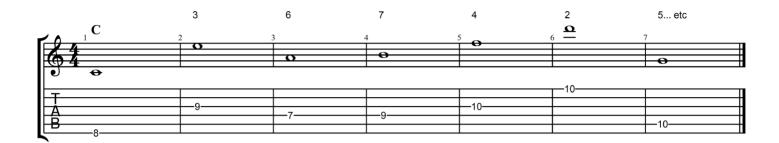
This isn't something that comes easily, but since we understand the concept, we shouldn't ignore the application. I know firsthand that feeling of, "I don't want to do that right now" because it means confronting a weakness we have. I could have fixed so much about my playing and saved years of work later, if I'd not given in to that feeling! Please, don't be like 20-year-old Levi!

OK, onto the final few exercises that are going to set us up for the rest of the book.

Earlier, we looked at the interval pattern of the major scale. Knowing where these intervals are located on the fretboard is going to be fundamental moving forward, especially when we begin comparing other scales to them, so let's do some work on embedding them now.

We'll start by playing a C root note on the sixth string, played with the first finger, then on the audio I'll call out a series of numbers. These are intervals, so when I say "3" you'll play the 3rd of the scale (7th fret of the fifth string, or 9th fret on the third). When I say "6", you'll play the 6th of the scale (7th fret, fourth string, or 10th fret, second string), and so on.

Example 2n



Now we're going to look at the same idea, but with a root note on the fifth string. This time I'll call out multiple intervals to find, so start out by reminding yourself of the numbers that identify each note, then follow the audio.

Example 20



We've just scratched the surface here. This is the sort of thing we could spend weeks or months working on. I've been working to improve this skill for over a decade and it's still something I'm looking to get better at. All chords, arpeggios, and scales are just a collection of intervals, and if we can see those intervals effortlessly, then we'll be able to play any sound easily.

Interval recognition is a skill we're going to come back to again and again in this book, so don't be afraid to return to this section and keep testing yourself by going for different scale positions, different tempos, different notes... The more you do it, the easier it becomes!

Routine Two - Natural Minor Scale

If the major scale is the fundamental building block of music, the minor scale is its brother – it's closest relative.

The first term that comes up when thinking about the natural minor scale is "relative minor". In other words, the minor scale can be found within the major scale, and we locate it by starting on the 6th degree.

C Major = C, D, E, F, G, A, B, C

A Minor = A, B, C, D, E, F, G, A

These scales contain identical notes, and we call A Minor the *relative minor scale* of C Major.

This formula will always be true, regardless of which major scale we're using.

Bb Major = Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G, A, Bb

The 6th degree of Bb Major is G, so the relative minor of Bb Major is G Minor.

G Minor = G, A, Bb, C, D, Eb, F, G

You'll have probably also heard the natural minor scale referred to as the Aeolian mode. We can play the major scale starting from any of its seven notes, and each of these scales is referred to as a different mode.

I like to think of modes as different "states". A light switch has just two states or modes – on or off. A dice has six possible states/modes it can rest in. Similarly, the major scale has seven modes. It's the same notes, but from seven different perspectives.

That said, although A Minor has the same collection of notes as C Major, if I'm playing over an A Minor groove, it doesn't sound great if I'm thinking/playing C Major. Why? Because I'll phrase the melodies differently, emphasising certain notes when I'm thinking from a C perspective. It's far better to treat each mode as a sound in its own right, so that when we're playing over an A Minor vamp, we're using an A Minor sound.

Thinking about modes in terms of the parent scale and viewing them as "all the same sound from different starting points" is called *derivative modal theory*. It's quite common to see scales taught this way, because it's quick and sounds simple, but the truth is, it's a shortcut. It will get some quick results, like learning to drive a car without changing gears. But although you might get driving quicker, you can't drive around in first gear forever!

For this reason, I don't like to compare A Minor to C Major. I can't – they're the same thing!

It's far more helpful to compare the C Minor scale to C Major. When we do this, we can really understand the difference between the major and minor scales, and we also get a meaningful formula.

C Major contains the notes C, D, E, F, G, A, B

C Minor contains the notes C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, Bb

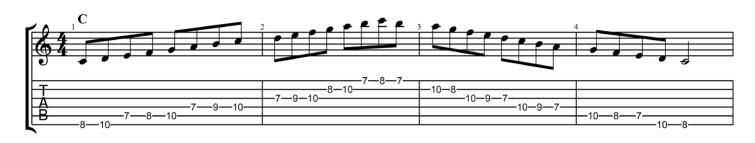
Viewed like this, it becomes clear that the minor scale is like a major scale but with a b3, b6 and b7. This yields the minor scale formula of 1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7.

This method of comparing scales is called *parallel modal theory* – comparing scales from the same root note.

Like any sound in music, the minor scale is a collection of ingredients that work together, and the characteristic sound of the minor comes from its b3, b6 and b7 ingredients.

Out first step in practicing the minor scale is to play it ascending and descending while saying the intervals out loud. To highlight the sound of the minor, we'll play the C Major scale first, followed by the C Minor scale, really focusing on where the b3, b6 and b7 intervals are located.

Example 3a

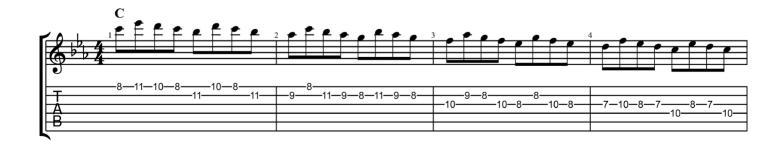


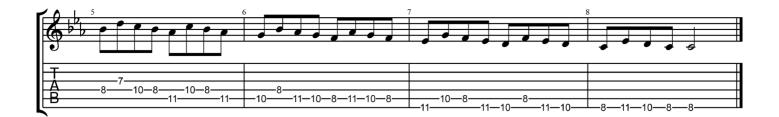


Let's explore this position a bit more by playing a sequence through the scale. Remember, sequences are a wonderful way to test your scale pattern knowledge, and you can work at applying them to all of your scales/positions over time.

This sequence starts on the root, jumps up to the b3, down to the 2nd, then back to the root. Then we move down and repeat this motif, this time starting on the b7 (b7, 2nd, 1, b7), and then from the b6 (b6, 1, b7, b6), and finally from the 5th (5th, b7, b6, 5th) and so on.

Example 3b





As with our major scales, we should be able to play our minor scales without hesitation in various positions. For example, with the root note on the fifth string.

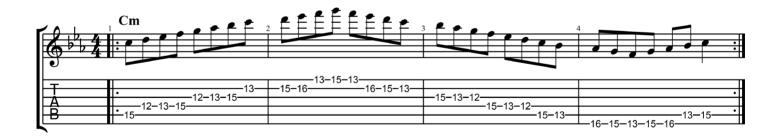
As you play this, I want you to compare it to the C Major scale in the same position. Look at the pattern and notice when you're playing the b3, b6 and b7 intervals.

Example 3c



How about the C Minor scale in the higher register, still with the root on the fifth string, but now in backward form?

Example 3d



Or, with the root on the sixth string in backward form?

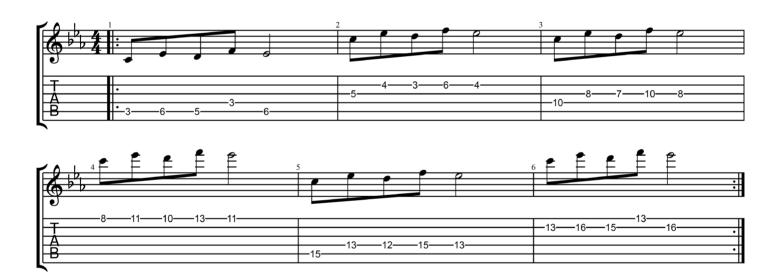
Example 3e



I find that one of the best ways to train the sound of scales into my fingers is to play simple melodies that include the key intervals of the scale. We know that the b3, b6 and b7 are the minor "character" intervals and the tones that distinguish it from the major scale, so here is a line constructed from root, b3, 2nd, 4th and b3, played in different areas of the neck.

An exercise like this helps to train our fingers and focus on what the b3 sounds like played over a minor chord.

Example 3f

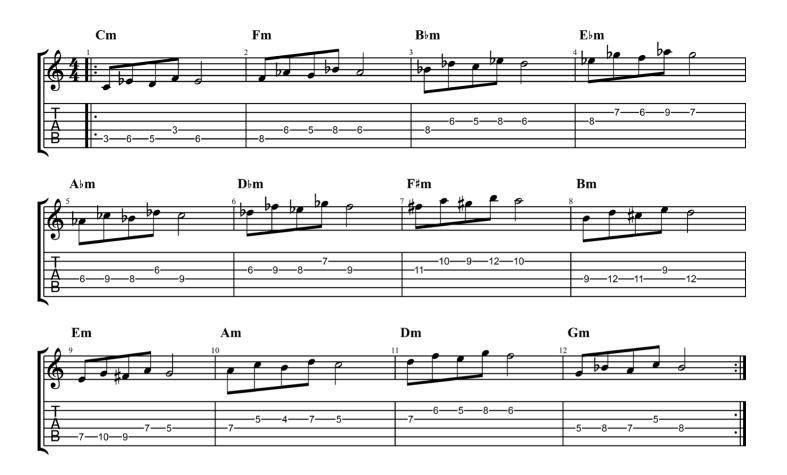


We can take the same melody and move it through all twelve keys. This is a great exercise that requires us to be able to do two things: first, to visualise the melody, and secondly to locate it in the next key ahead of time.

Knowing the melody is essential, because if you need to commit all your brain power to remembering its shape, then you won't have the capacity to think about what's coming next. We want to be able to do both things well, so apply them to the instrument slowly.

Remember, this isn't about learning the exact fingering I'm using, it's just about learning to play one thing twelve times – as opposed to remembering 60 notes!

Example 3g



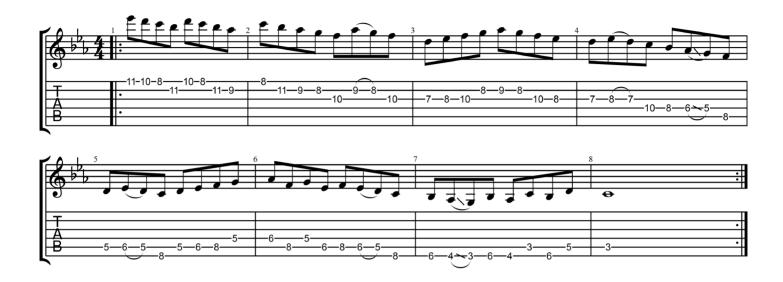
Here's another melody, this time ascending the minor scale from the root, moving up to the b6 and coming down to the 5th. The b6 naturally wants to pull down to the 5th, so this is a great thing for us to practice.

Example 3h



Now we've located the key intervals, it's worth us looking at some longer melodic etudes using minor scale patterns that cover more of the fretboard. Here I'm using some three-note-per-string ideas and even a four-note-per-string idea on the fourth string as a way of transitioning down the neck.

Example 3i



Another great way to develop scale knowledge is to abandon string crossing altogether and explore the scale in single-string fashion.

The minor scale has a TSTTSTT pattern, but rather than thinking about that, I find it more helpful to focus on the note intervals and how they relate to one another.

Here is the C Minor scale laid out on the second and third strings.

Example 3j

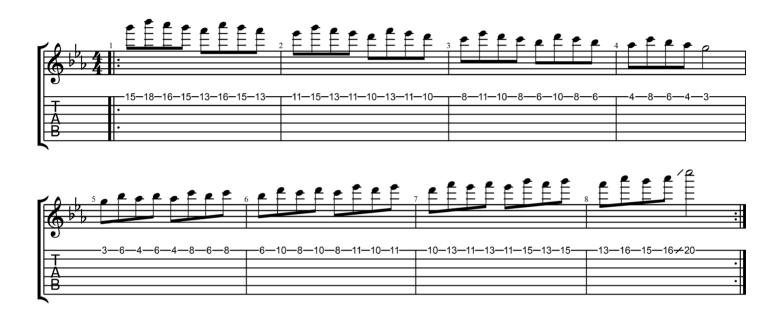


If you spend some time studying that pattern, you'll learn that the distance between the root and the 2nd is a tone. From the 2nd to the b3 is a semitone. The b3 to the 4th is a tone. The 4th to the 5th is a tone. The 5th to the b6 is a semitone. The b6 to b7 is a tone. And the b7 to the root is a tone.

We can intellectualise that, but what we really need to do it hear it and anticipate it. Play Example 3j again slowly, this time with your eyes closed. Play the first note, then slide your first finger up to the next note. Don't open your eyes and read the TAB, just use your ears to hear what the next note should be and get a feel for how far away it is. Do this for the whole scale, ascending and descending.

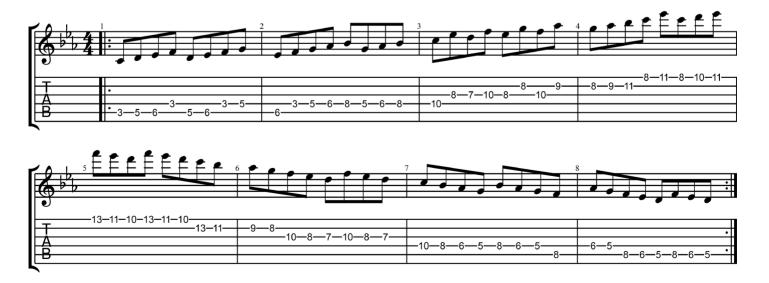
Now, here are two sequences on the first string using the notes of C Minor. I really want you to try and hear these in your head clearly before you play them, and build a connection between the sound you expect to hear and how you move your hand to play that sound.

Example 3k



Here's a longer idea moving from C Minor low down on the neck into the higher register. This time, we're combining some position-based ideas with single-string movements for position changes.

Example 31

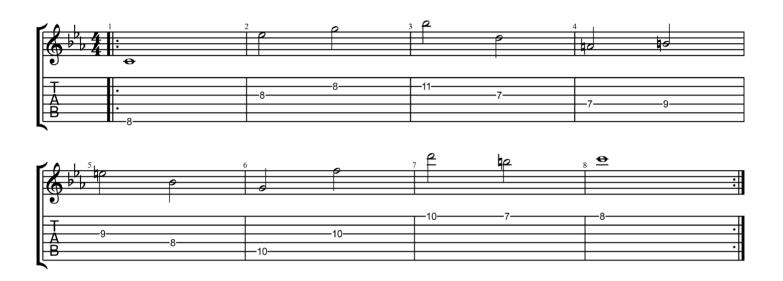


Like the previous routine, I want to end here by taking root notes on the sixth and fifth strings, and finding the intervals as I call them out on the audio.

To make things a little harder though, we'll combine all of the intervals we've learned so far. That is:

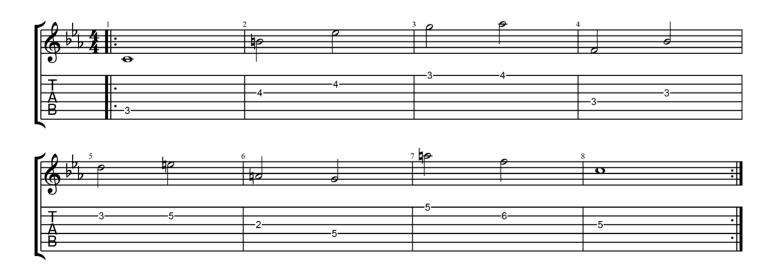
Here's that idea played from the sixth string. In the notation below I've added some intervals, and these are for you to work out. I'll reveal the answers on the audio, then continue the exercise so you can continue to find intervals on your own.

Example 3m



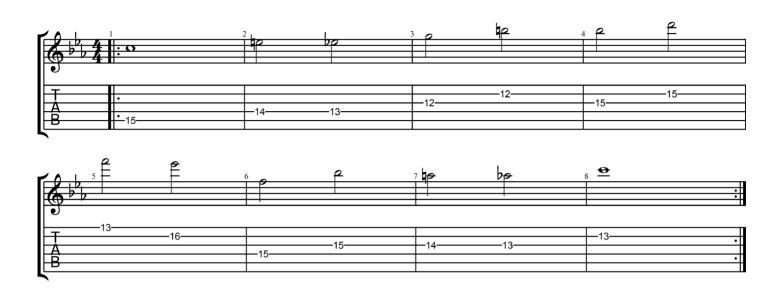
Now let's do the same thing from a root note on the fifth string, played with the first finger. Again, I've notated some for you and will continue the exercise on the audio.

Example 3n



Finally, here's a root note on the fifth string, with intervals placed behind the root note.

Example 30



With the major and minor scales under your belt, you've learned 10 of the 12 intervals that exist in the Western tonal system of music. Before we learn the others, we're going to look at some modes we can play with the intervals we already know.

You may want to consider how valuable theory and note names will be for your future. To be clear, this isn't for everybody, but if you're looking to become a professional musician (where you'll likely be working with musicians who aren't guitarists!), knowing your keys, scales and intervals really well can't hurt.

We've put a lot of work in C Major and C Minor, but knowing how to navigate these ideas around the Circle of 5ths is something you may want to stop and devote some time to before moving on.

Routine Three – Mixolydian Mode

So far, we've looked at the major and minor scales. We've played them all over the neck and have a good understanding of the intervals they contain. We know that the intervals in each scale are like the ingredients in a meal – they add up to a particular flavour, which can elicit certain emotions.

It's often said that the major scale sounds happy or upbeat, while the minor scale sounds sad. If that's all you have to say about them, that's fine, but that feels too broad to me. I'd rather you made your own, more meaningful associations with these sounds, but here are mine!

To me, the major scale sounds predictable, like nursery rhymes, but pleasing in a clichéd way; folky at times and, at worst, bland.

The minor scale sounds yearning, neoclassical, dark and dramatic, somewhat cheesy but rewarding.

That's how I think of these particular scales. Having your own way of thinking about them is encouraged!

You may have noticed that "bluesy" wasn't a word I used to describe either of those scales. I wouldn't use them when playing in that context, because they don't sound very bluesy and neither do the chords built from them – that's where the Mixolydian mode comes in.

The Mixolydian mode is the fifth mode of the major scale. Using derivative modal theory, we can take the F Major scale and play it from its 5th degree to create the C Mixolydian mode... but you know I don't like that approach.

Considered from a parallel modal point of view, here's how C Mixolydian compares to C Major:

C Major = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7

C Mixolydian = 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, b7

Ah! So, the Mixolydian mode is like a major scale but with a b7? Yes, it's as simple as that.

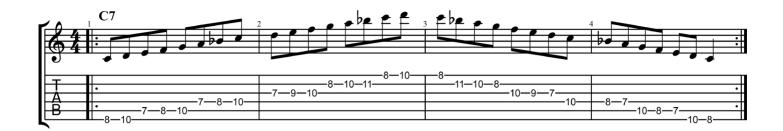
The Mixolydian mode is the scale we use over dominant chords, because a dominant chord is a major triad with an added b7.

When we talk about the Mixolydian I'm with Ted Green's approach. What does the term "Mixolydian" even mean? It sounds like some old Greek word that needs translating before we can understand it. Instead, it makes sense to call the Mixolydian mode "the dominant scale" like Ted, because it's a scale that perfectly fits dominant chords!

Let's check it out.

Here is the C Mixolydian scale played ascending and descending. Remember that it's almost identical to the major scale, we've just got a b7 instead of a natural 7. But that "new note" isn't new, right? We encountered the b7 interval in the minor scale.

Example 4a



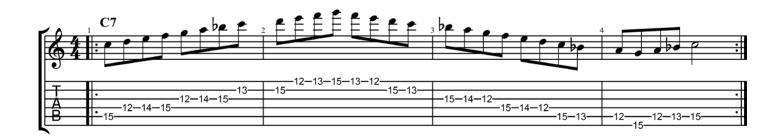
Let's play that in a few more places on the neck. Here's the scale rooted on the fifth string at the 3rd fret.

Example 4b



And here's that same scale played up at the 15th fret on the fifth string.

Example 4c



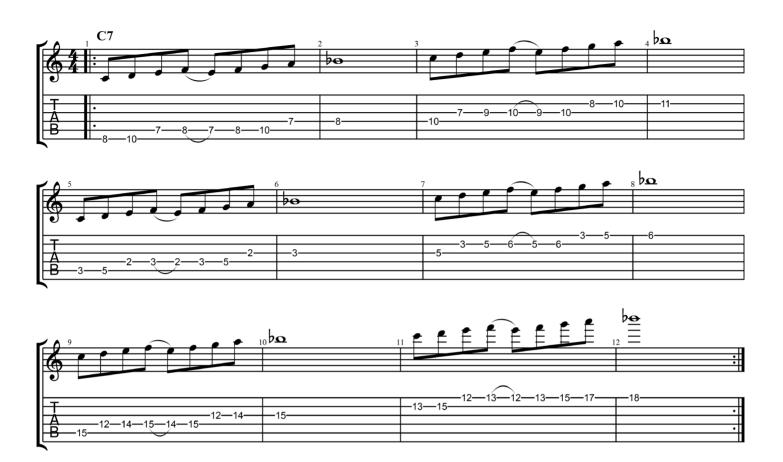
So, I guess that means the key ingredient of the Mixolydian mode is just the b7, right?

Well, not quite. Since it has a b7, what sets it apart from the minor scale, which also has a b7?

The two most important "character" notes in the Mixolydian are the b7 that distinguish it from the major scale and the natural 3rd that tells us it's a major-sounding mode, not a minor one.

Here's a simple melody that ascends the Mixolydian and uses a 3rd - 4th - 3rd movement before ascending to the b7. We're playing it in six different places on the neck.

Example 4d

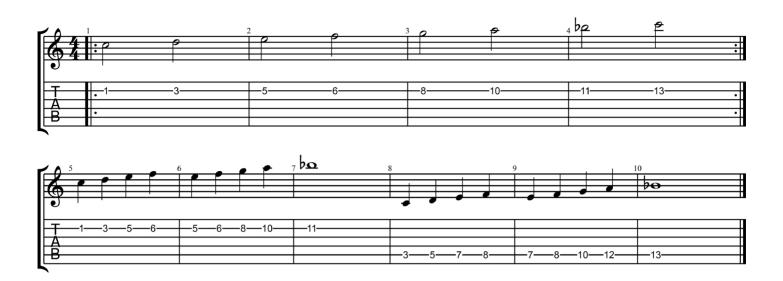


Now let's return to playing the scale along a single string... but with a twist. As in the previous chapter, I want you to play the first note of the scale then close your eyes. Work your way up the scale by listening to the intervals and anticipating each note. The aim is to "hear" the note clearly before you play it. Bonus points if you can sing it – and keep those eyes closed!

To begin with, it will sound just like the major scale, but when we play the 6th and we're anticipating the next note, we're looking for the b7 - a very different sound to the major scale, and we don't have to move far to get it. The big question is... can you hear it?

After playing that, let's apply the melody from Example 4d to a single string too.

Example 4e



Let's talk for a second about application. Although we can move major and minor scales through all twelve keys, we never have to do that when playing real music. Dominant chords, however, are a staple of blues, rock, gospel, jazz and more, where it's common to see a series of dominant chords in a progression that move through several keys.

Take the 12-bar blues, for example. It's a sequence made from three dominant chords.

A 12-bar blues in A contains A7, D7 and E7 chords.

These aren't pop progressions, where it's common to have one scale that fits all the chords. All three dominant chords belong to different keys, so ideally when playing a blues, we want to draw from three different Mixolydian modes:

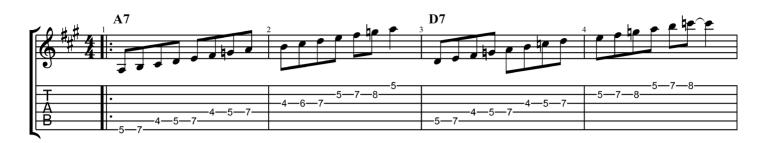
A7 = A Mixolydian

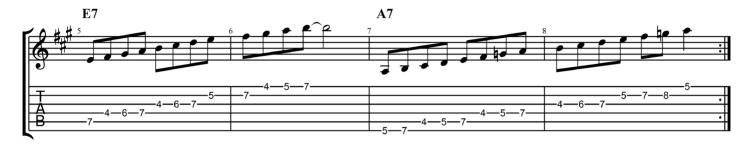
D7 = D Mixolydian

E7 = E Mixolydian

Let's apply them as scales now.

Example 4f



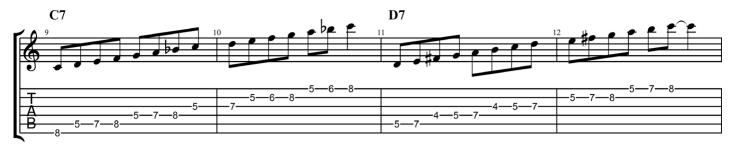


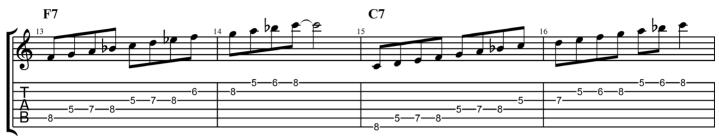
Let's try the same concept, but over a different chord progression. This time we'll do C7 - D7 - F7 - C7 and play the Mixolydian associated with each chord. Let's also mix things up a little bit by switching positions between repeats.

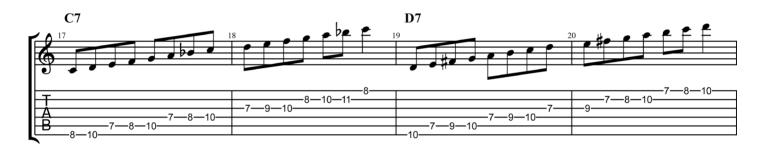
Example 4g













Another way I love to practice my scales is to break them down into smaller melodic cells and play them around the neck and through key changes.

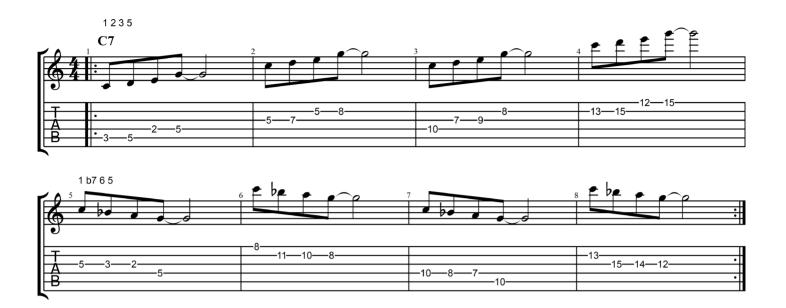
The two primary cells I use from the Mixolydian mode are:

1, 2, 3, 5

1, b7, 6, 5

This is what they look like on the fretboard.

Example 4h

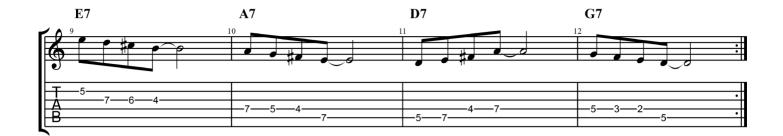


These cells are great for practicing in all twelve keys moving around the Cycle of 4ths. No matter which cell we play, we always start on the root note and we always end on the 5th. In other words, we only need to move down a tone from where we end, and we'll be at the next key/chord.

Here's that idea applied, but with some space between each cell to allow you some thinking/processing time.

Example 4i

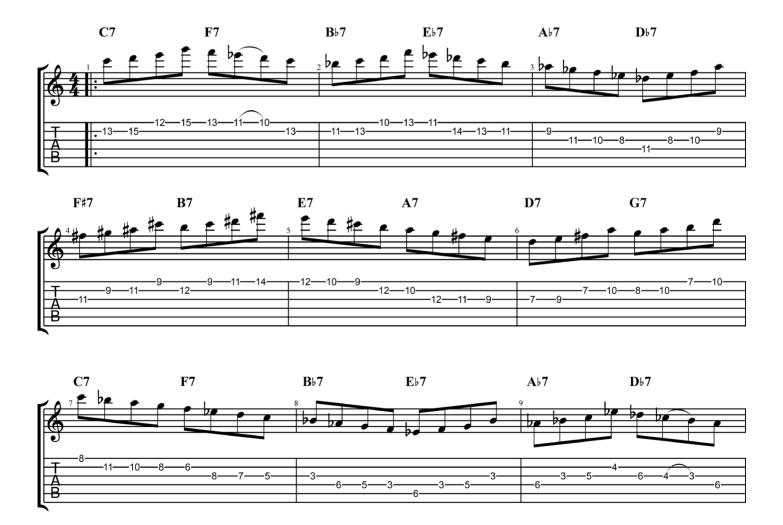




This exercise becomes a real head-melter (but also strangely therapeutic when you start to get it) if we move it to a higher position and change chord every two beats.

In my own practice, exercises like this are a battle where I'm trying to work out if I'm using my head ("I'm playing C, so next I'll go to F and ascend..." etc) or trusting the connection I've built between my hands and ears. I know I want it to be the second scenario, but the only way to get there is to slow things down and engage with the former!

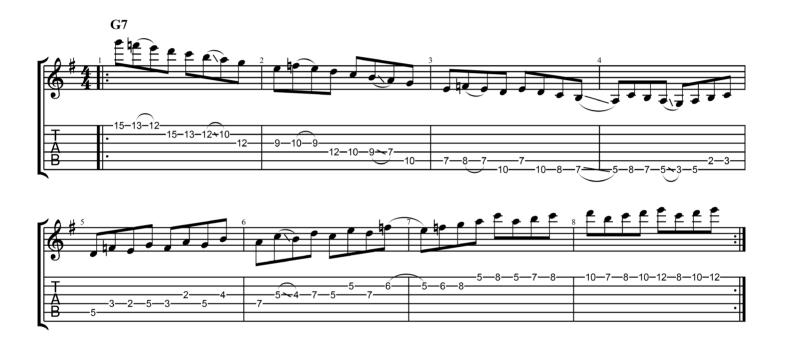
Example 4j





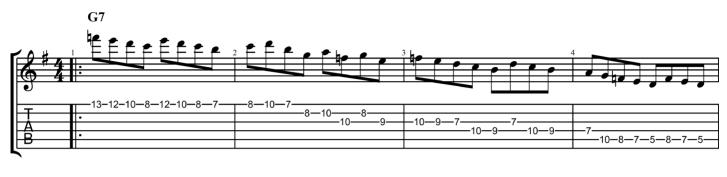
Now let's try a couple of Mixolydian examples that span the whole neck. Like the single-string ideas we've looked at so far, I want you to focus on anticipating the next note and feel how far you need to move to play it.

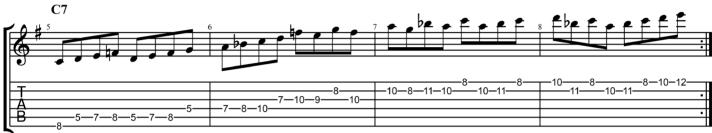
Example 4k



Here's one more long 1/8th note run, but this time we'll move from G Mixolydian to C Mixolydian.

Example 41





We won't go any further with the dominant scale sound in this chapter, but remember, when you learn the new patterns and ideas contained in the chapters that follow, you should come back and apply those concepts to the Mixolydian mode (or any scale you've learned).

Right, get to work!

Routine Four - Dorian Mode

This week it's time to look at a new mode and, as we learned last week, the best way of doing that is to first look at its pattern of intervals.

The Dorian mode is the second mode of the major scale and has the following interval structure:

1, 2, b3, 4, 5, 6, b7

We could view this as a Mixolydian mode but with a b3.

Or, we could view it as a minor scale with a natural 6th.

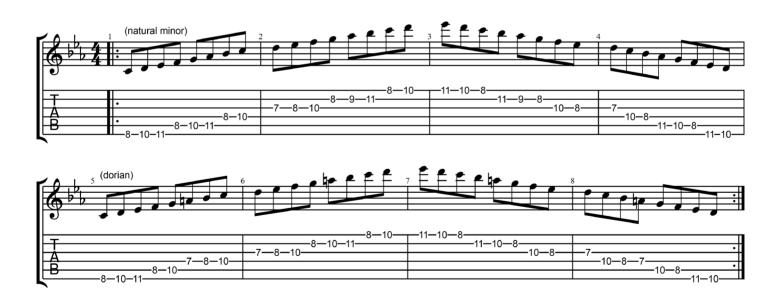
So, what's the best way to understand it?

Dorian is a *minor* mode because it has a b3, so it makes most sense to compare it to the minor scale.

In terms of the mood it creates, it has many of the characteristics of the minor sound but with a brighter, funkier edge, because we no longer have that mournful b6. Instead, Dorian adds a very sweet sounding natural 6th. That note is the difference between dark neoclassical minor and upbeat sounding minor blues-rock. Randy Rhoads vs Carlos Santana, if you like.

Let's start by running up and down the natural minor scale, then switch to the Dorian mode. As you do this, really focus on where the 6th is and how it sounds, compared to the b6 of the natural minor.

Example 5a



The b6 of the natural minor sounds a little unstable and wants to resolve down to the 5th. The 6th of the Dorian mode is much more stable.

Since the b3 tells us that the scale is minor and the 6th sets it apart from the natural minor, these are the most important "character" notes of Dorian.

Here's the Dorian mode played in the same position in an ascending and descending fashion, but using a sequence of diatonic thirds.

Example 5b



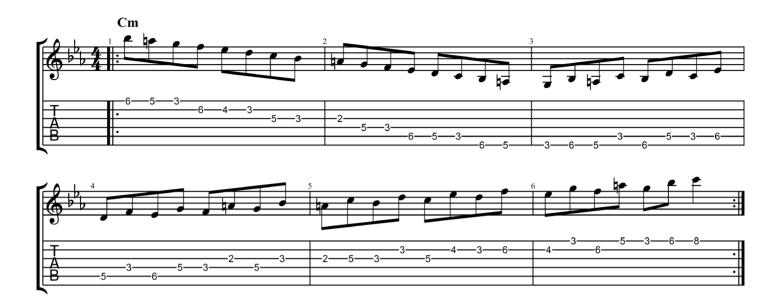
As with every scale, it serves us best if we're able to play it in different places on the neck. Here's the C Dorian mode played from the fifth string root, first as an ascending scale, then descending in a sequence of thirds.

Example 5c



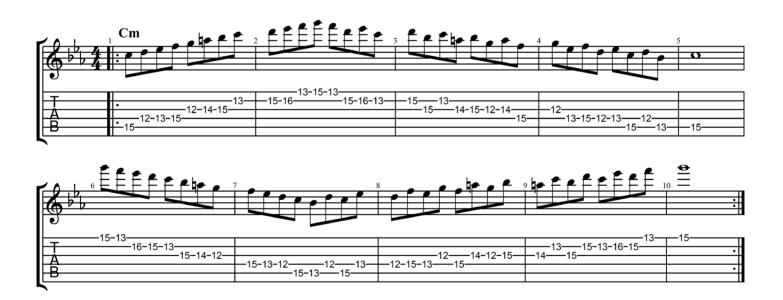
We could also reverse that idea by descending the scale, then ascending the sequence of thirds.

Example 5d



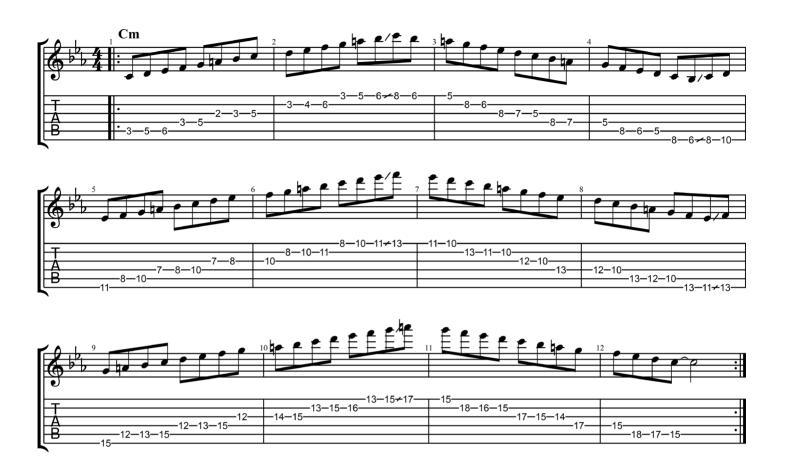
Now let's play the same idea moved up to play the root note on the fifth string with the fourth finger.

Example 5e



Next, we want to start covering the whole neck with a five-position based system. So, in the following example we'll ascend C Dorian from the 3rd fret (A shape) and when we reach the top of that position we'll shift up to the next one (G shape) and descend. Then we'll ascend the E shape, descend the D, ascend the C, then we're back at the A shape an octave higher.

Example 5f



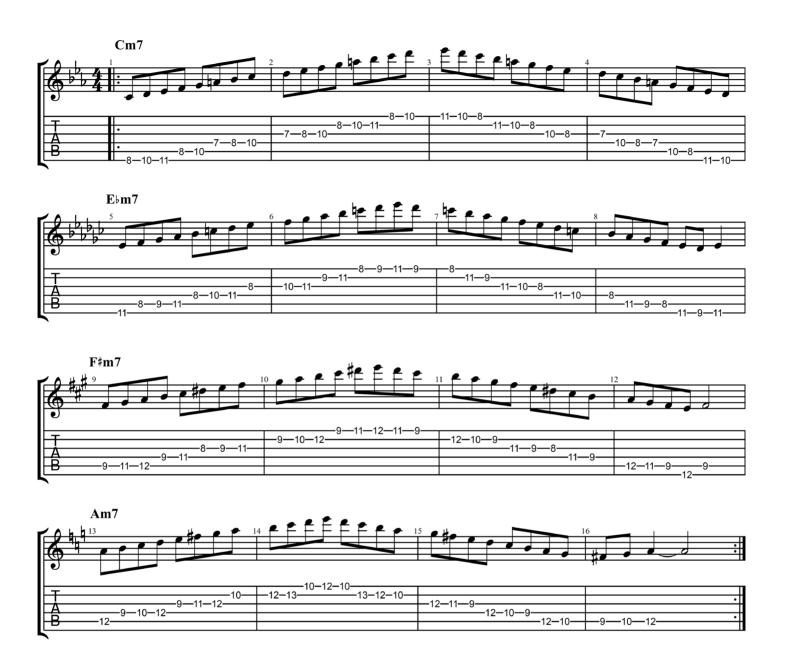
The Dorian mode is one of the staples of the rock-fusion sound, with guitarists like Greg Howe and Guthrie Govan using it extensively in compositions. A common chord progression in this context has minor 7 chords moving up in minor 3rd intervals, such as,

$$Cm7 - Ebm7 - F#m7 - Am7$$

This is a great progression to work on because it's both musical and lays out well on the fretboard.

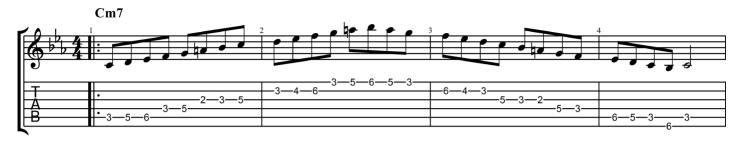
In the next exercise we'll play over this chord progression, but we'll keep our hand around the 8th fret area.

Example 5g



We could play this same progression in any area of the neck, like here in the 3rd fret zone.

Example 5h









Now we're going to make it harder... much harder!

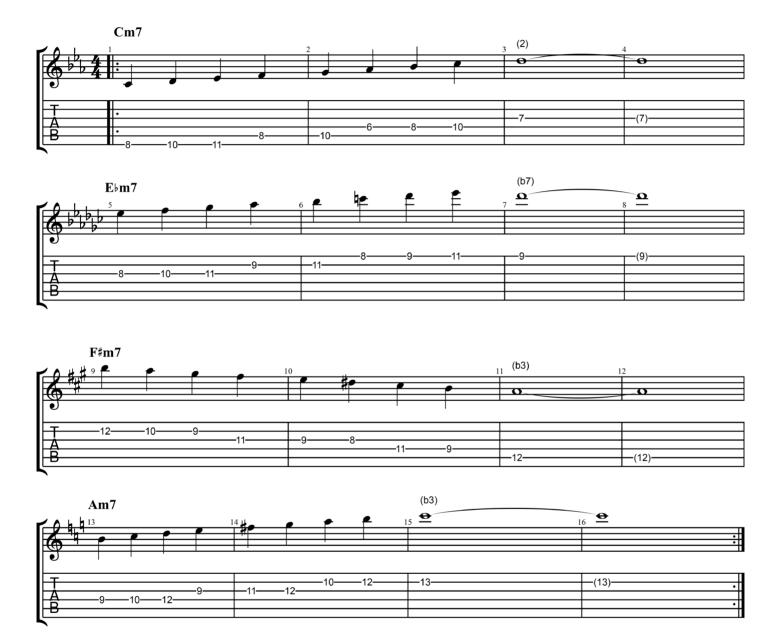
Using the same chord progression, we could work at connecting each Dorian mode by the *next closest note* instead of just changing when we get to the bottom of the scale.

To work on this, we'll start by giving our brains the best chance we can. We'll play nine notes, one on each beat moving up the scale and ending in bar three. When we're there, we'll leave two whole bars to work out where the next note is.

So, for example, we ascend the C Dorian mode and come to rest on the 2nd. Now we're looking at the fretboard and trying to map out the upcoming Eb Dorian mode, so we can see where the closest note is. In this case, we can actually move up one fret to land on the root of Eb Dorian.

As we ascend the Eb Dorian scale, we come to rest on the b7. Again, we're giving ourselves two bars to map out the F# Dorian mode and make the change by landing on its 4th, etc.

Example 5i



When I teach this idea, I always liken it to the RAM in a computer. The tech savvy among you will know the pain of needing your computer to do multiple tasks while struggling with 8 or even 4GB of RAM.

In the early stages of learning the fretboard, our brain struggles to complete multiple tasks simultaneously, but that's what we need it to do. So, we have to work on this method of creating stress on the brain while practicing. This is the only way we're going to see real results.

We must keep tweaking things to keep the pressure on – change positions, start at the top and come down, play for three bars rather than two (giving yourself half the time to try and see the change) or even increase the tempo. But the *real* challenge comes when we remove the long note. Here's the same exercise, but now we'll just play 1/4 notes through the changes without pausing.

Example 5j

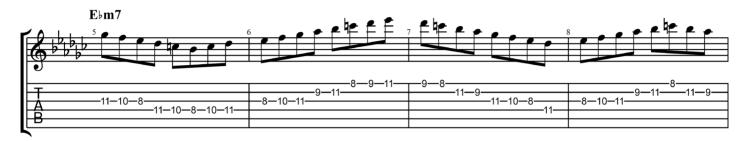


Another approach is to place a restriction on yourself and, at the same time, limit the note options you're looking for. For example, we can play the same exercise in 1/8th notes, which increases the difficulty, but when we need to change scale, we'll just aim for the root, b3 of 5th of the next chord – the strong notes.

Notice that we're staying on the top four strings (apart from one note) in this exercise – a further limitation that narrow our options.

Example 5k







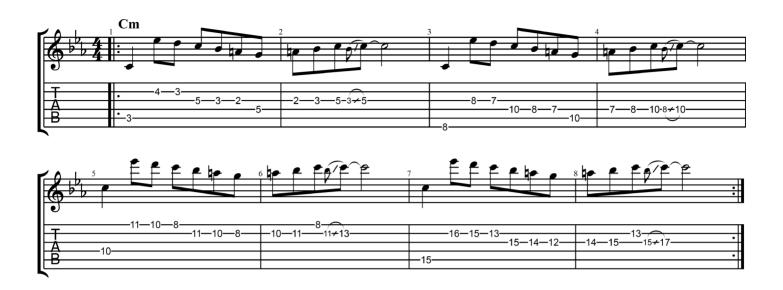


I can't stress this enough, but remember that this exercise is not about memorising and repeating exactly what I play here. Sure, learn that first, but ultimately, it's about learning to apply a concept. If it helps, sit down with a pen and paper and write your own pathway through the scales. When you're fluent at playing that, put it away and write a new one. Then look for a different way, and so on. Keep flexing that brain and you'll be fast-tracking your RAM upgrade!

Let's finish this routine with another good exercise to help us break away from lines that start on the root and ascend – one that also forces us to think about and visualise the intervals.

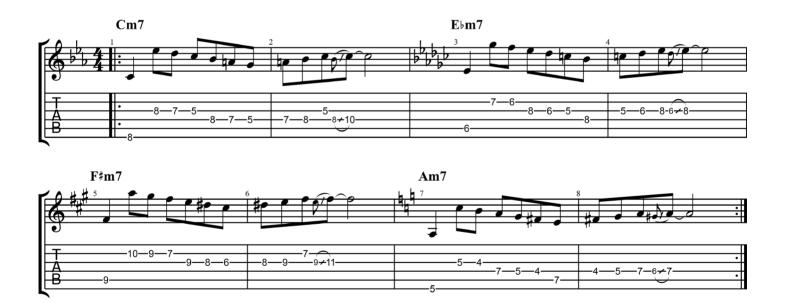
Here, we'll start by playing the C root note, then jump up to the b3 an octave higher. This is training us to be able to see key notes in each of our scale positions. To me, the b3 is the best note in any of the minor modes!

Example 51



Now let's take that same melodic idea and apply it to the modulating minor 7 chords from the previous exercises.

Example 5m



The previous exercise is such a fun one to apply to all the previous scales, but you can also do it by moving up to other intervals. So, in the final example we'll jump up to the 5th each time instead of the b3.

Example 5n



OK, get to work and I'll see you on the next routine!

Routine Five - Pentatonic Scales

When planning this three-book series on scales, chords and arpeggios, I did a lot of thinking about what to do with pentatonic scales. Pentatonics are described as scales, but since they only contain five notes they have more in common with arpeggios than scales.

I could easily devote an entire book to pentatonic scales, as our own Shaun Baxter did recently with *just* the dominant pentatonic scale! Instead, I've included pentatonics here as a way of presenting to you something we've been secretly working on all along, and to show you where we'll be going with it, moving forward.

Many years ago, I was lucky enough to get some one-on-one time with the amazing modern jazz guitarist Wayne Krantz – then based in New York, now residing in Buenos Aires. For those who don't know, Wayne is *really* into intervals. After he'd been playing for some time, he began to think of every seven-note scale as just a collection of seven different intervallic ingredients. That led him to produce his book, *An Improviser's OS*, in which he presents every possible combination of interval collections that contain between two and eleven notes. In other words, for those looking for the ultimate resource, the book contains *everything* found in the Western twelve-tone system – every two-note interval, every triad, every arpeggio, every pentatonic scale, and so on – it's all there.

I say this to make the point that pentatonic scales are *just another collection of intervals* like any scale. You'll have almost certainly learned them as a series of shapes and patterns on the fretboard, but I want to encourage you to learn the formulas for these scales and begin to identify the intervals on the fretboard. This may feel like a backward step and harder at first, but in the long run it's going to open many doors in your playing.

Let's start by looking at the major pentatonic scale, which has the formula,

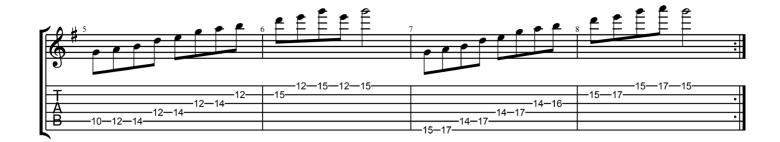
1, 2, 3, 5, 6

That's an interesting collection of notes. It's a major scale that's missing its 4th and 7th. It's also the Mixolydian mode minus its 4th and b7, which makes the major pentatonic a wonderfully versatile tool that will work in either context.

Here is the G Major Pentatonic scale laid out in three positions on the fretboard to get you started. As you play through this, think about the intervals rather than the pattern, and test how confidently you can visualise these notes as intervals that belong to scales you've already worked on.

Example 6a



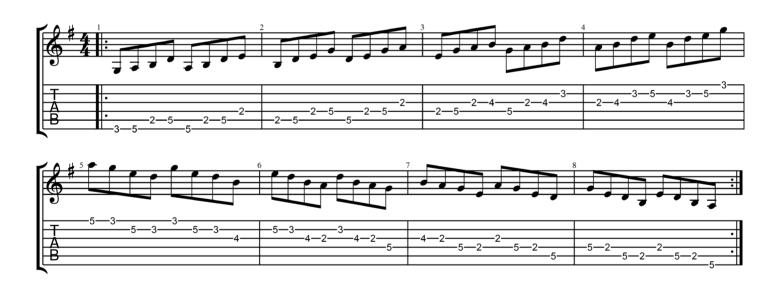


It's most common to see pentatonic scales presented in two-note-per-string patterns and there are lots of sequences you can work on to keep yourself on your toes with these patterns.

For example, starting on the root note, you can ascend four notes of the scale, then go back to the second note in the scale and ascend four notes again. Then ascend four notes from the third note in the scale, and so on.

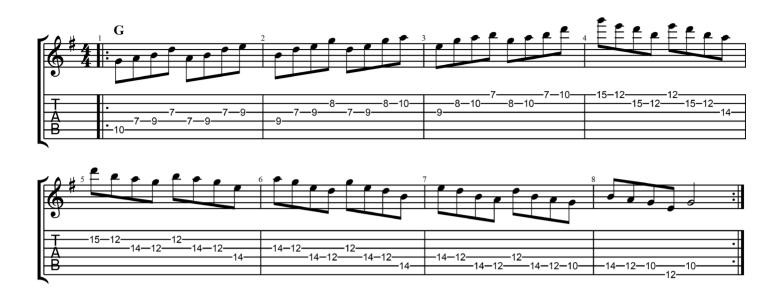
Here's that sequence ascending and descending in the first pattern. There are times when there are two notes on the same fret on adjacent strings, so you'll quickly realise that you need to sharpen up your "finger rolling" technique i.e., play both notes using the same finger, rolling from one string to the next. The notes shouldn't ring into each other, so be careful with that detail.

Example 6b



Here's the same idea played from a fifth string root. Here, we ascend in that position, then move up and descend the next position.

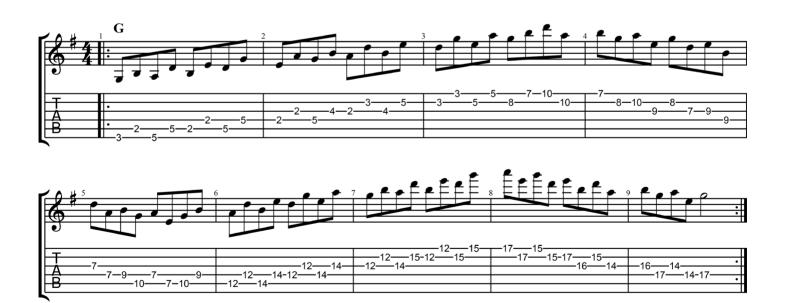
Example 6c



Another great sequence that is both musical and a great technical workout is to split these two-note-per-string patterns into lower and higher notes. We can play the two lower notes on adjacent strings, followed by the higher two, as below.

Note how we ascend one position, descend the next, then ascend the final one. This keeps us working on both the scale and the technique.

Example 6d



It's great to know these two-note-per-string patterns, but now let's work on breaking out of them using what I call the "if this, therefore this" approach.

What I mean by that is, as we develop an understanding of our intervals and their relationship to each other, we can use the location of one thing we know to tell us the location of something we're looking for.

For example, any time we play the root note, the 2nd will always be two frets higher.

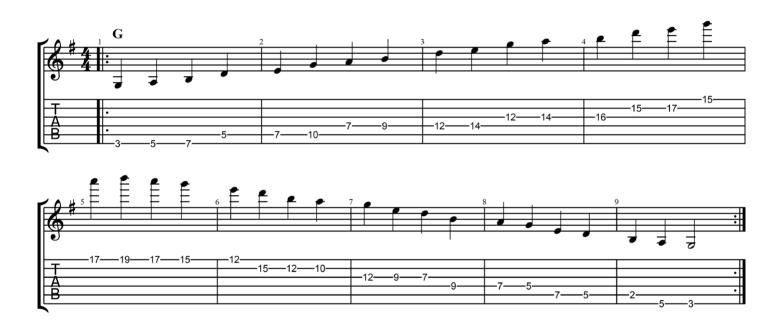
If we play the 5th, the 6th will be two frets higher.

If we play the 6th, the root will be three frets higher.

We can also learn these relationships on adjacent strings.

Here's a G Major Pentatonic scale played ascending and descending from the bottom of the neck to the top and back again. It's good to work on ideas like this slowly enough that your brain can keep up!

Example 6e

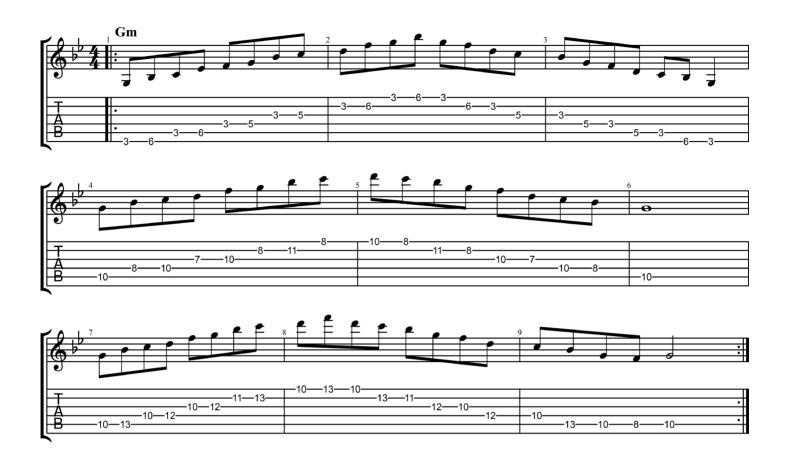


Now let's take a look at the minor pentatonic scale. As with the major, if you take the time to learn the intervals, you'll know this stuff better than ever. The intervallic formula for the minor pentatonic scale is,

It's the minor scale but missing its 2nd and b6. It's also the Dorian mode without its 2nd and natural 6th. The minor pentatonic works well in both those musical contexts.

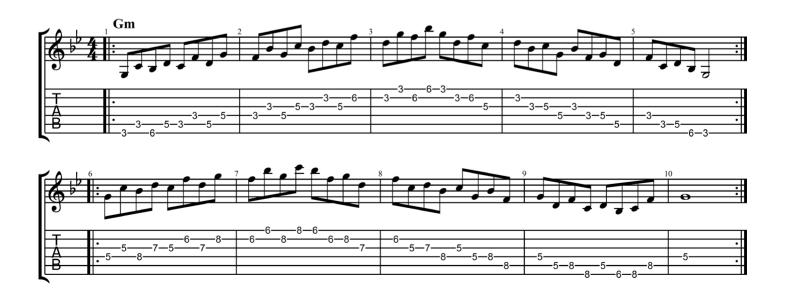
There are lots of ways we can play the scale, but the following positions are a good start.

Example 6f

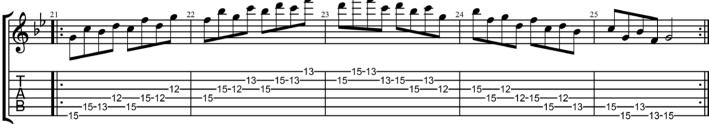


We want to really know our positions inside out, so here are the five positions broken down in the "low-high" sequence.

Example 6g



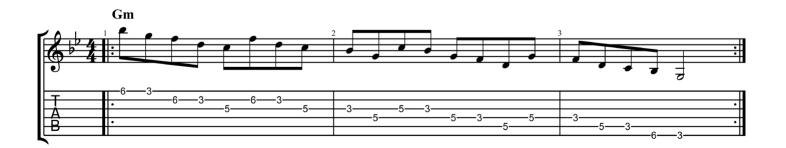


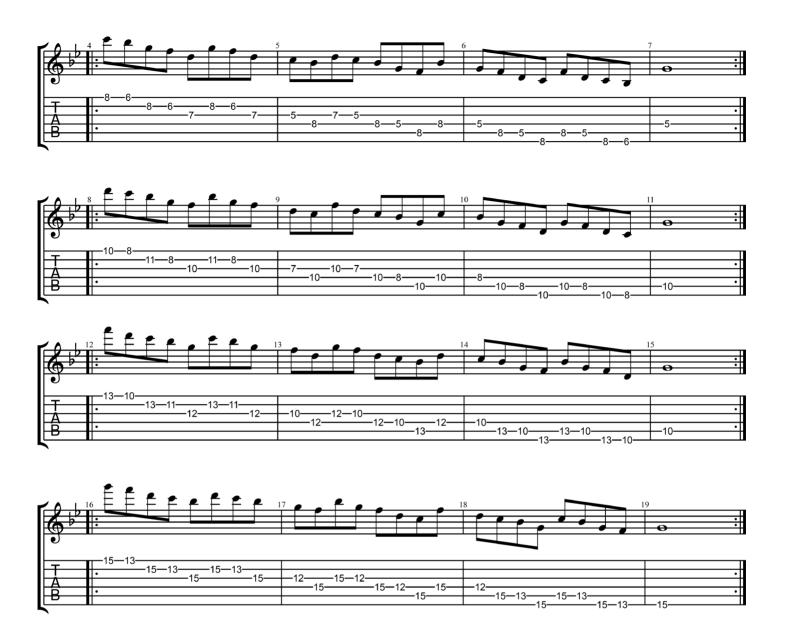


One of my favourite pentatonic patterns to work with is an Eric Johnson inspired series of descending fives. We start on the first string and descend five notes. This takes us down to the third string. Then we move back to the second string, play the higher of the two notes on that string, then descend five notes again, etc.

At the moment, our aim is not to be able to play this at blistering speed like Eric, we're just concerned with perfecting the finger rolling technique and focusing on getting our heads around the five-note pattern offset against the 4/4 rhythm.

Example 6h



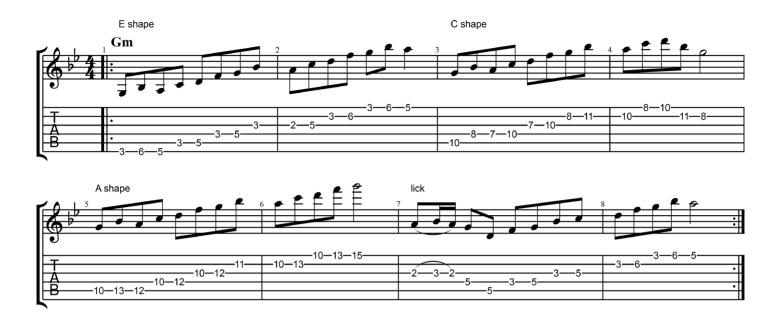


One of the more influential lessons I've had was when Guthrie Govan talked about how he views modes. He made the point that they don't have to be a binary thing, i.e., on or off. We can treat them more like a dimmer switch. In other words, we can play something that sounds *really obviously* Dorian, or we can ease off on the Dorian flavours and use the mode in a more subtle way.

Pentatonics are a great vehicle for doing this, because they can give us a nice skeleton of each mode without necessarily committing to the colourful notes. Then, when we want to add flavour, we can add other intervals around our pentatonic phrases to bring the spice.

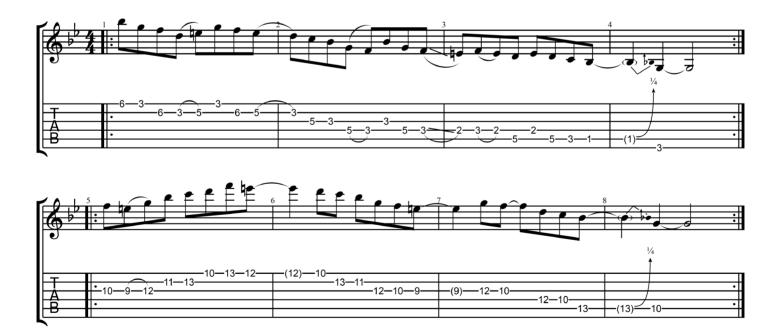
For example, we could play the minor pentatonic scale, but each time we play the b3, add the 2nd after it, like this.

Example 6i



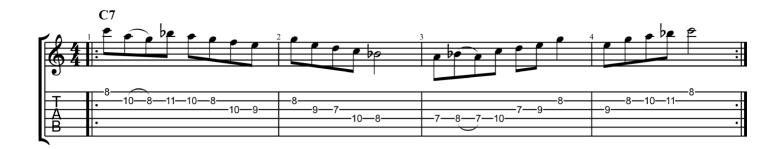
Here's another approach, where we add in the 6th interval around the minor pentatonic to give it some Dorian funkiness.

Example 6j



We can do this with the major pentatonic too! Here's a melody using the C Major Pentatonic scale, where we're adding the b7 to emphasise the Mixolydian sound.

Example 6k



And here's another melody using C Major Pentatonic where we add the 7th to create a major scale sound.

Example 61



To finish this chapter, I want us to consider a few other options that come under the category of pentatonic scales. This is a big topic in its own right, so this is just an overview.

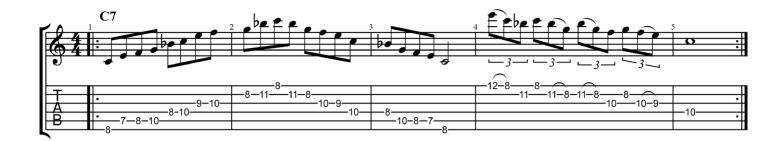
First is the "dominant pentatonic" scale. This is like the major pentatonic scale, but with its 6th interval raised to a b7 to make it perfectly fit a dominant 7 chord.

Example 6m



A cool alternative to this idea is to take the minor pentatonic scale and raise its b3 to a natural 3rd to give us 1, 3, 4, 5, b7. I've not seen anyone agree on a name for this scale, but it's another option for dominant chords.

Example 6n



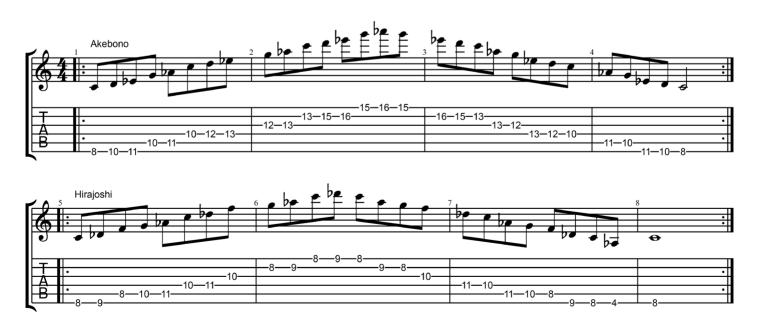
Another nice variant of the minor pentatonic scale is one where we switch the b7 for a 6th (1, b3, 4, 5, 6).

Example 60



And finally, here is a collection of scales often referred to as the Japanese pentatonic scales (however inaccurate that statement may be!), which includes the Akebono (1, 2, b3, 5, b6), Hirajoshi (1, b2, 4, 5, b6) and Kumoi (1, b2, 4, b5, b7). These are all wonderful sounds you can work on all over the neck.

Example 6p





I hope you've grasped the idea that our plain major and minor pentatonic scales provide a great framework around which we can pinpoint and add certain intervals to bring out different colours, depending on the musical context and the sound we're going for.

There is a lot of information here and huge potential for developing ideas that may take many years of practice, but hopefully, the idea of intervals simply being building blocks for all our scales will be something you'll see value in and continue to develop moving forward.

Routine Six – Harmonic Minor

With major scale harmony and its most important modes out of the way, I wanted to devote a little time to some other common collections of notes, and the logical place to look after the major scale is the harmonic minor scale.

The harmonic minor scale gets its name from the way it is used – as the basis for creating much of the harmony in minor keys.

The harmonic minor is identical to the natural minor scale, but the b7 is raised to a natural 7th.

Natural Minor = 1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, b7

Harmonic Minor = 1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, 7

This single note difference means that, whereas chord V in the key of A Natural Minor is Em7, in the key of A Harmonic Minor it's E7.

That dominant V chord is often used to create a strong resolution in minor key music, so it's common to see the harmonic minor used in that context.

With its formula of 1, 2, b3, 4, 5, b6, 7, in the key of C that gives us the notes C, D, Eb, F, G, Ab, B. Let's play the scale and listen to how it sounds. We'll start on a single string, as we've done before, so we can clearly see the interval distances between the notes.

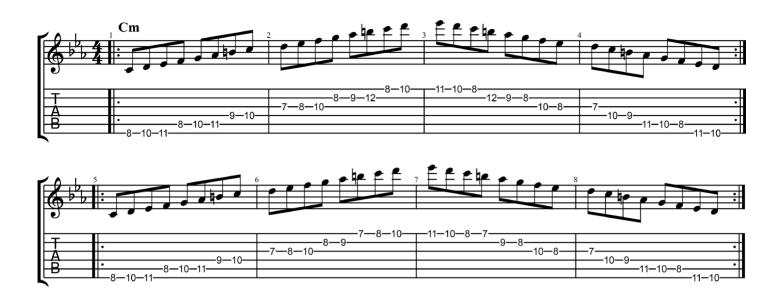
Example 7a



The first thing you should notice here (aside from the striking sound of the scale!) is that we now have a tone and a half gap between the b6 and the 7. This leap is immediately apparent when you hear the scale being used. Some say it has a very classical sound, but it's also a sound heard in lots of Eastern European folk music.

Let's play the scale with a root note at the 8th fret. There are two distinct fingering approaches. The first features that tone and a half gap on the second string in a three-note-per-string fashion that requires more of a hand stretch; the second fits more into the CAGED framework.

Example 7b



Both approaches have their drawbacks. While the stretch is harder on the hand, the CAGED approach requires us to be confident playing four notes on a string sometimes. This demands good control on shift slides.

A shift slide is where we play two notes on the same string using the same finger by shifting position. Both notes are still picked (unlike a legato slide) and the goal is to not even hear that we've used the shift slide. Here's the upper octave of the previous example with shift slides notated. We always shift using the last possible finger, so that's the fourth finger when ascending and the first finger when descending.

Example 7c



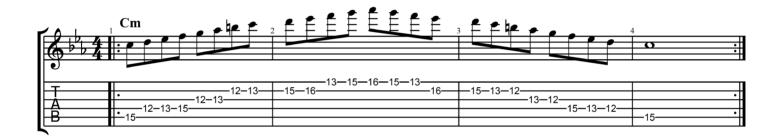
The nature of the guitar means that sometimes you have to play the pattern you least prefer. For example, when I play C Harmonic Minor around the 3rd fret, I must play a stretch on the first string.

Example 7d



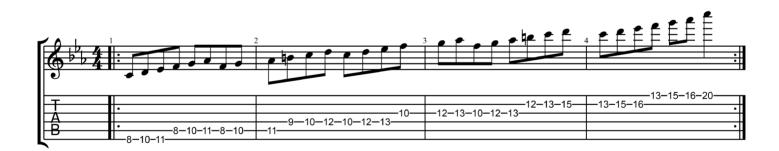
Here's the same scale, now played with the fourth finger up on the 15th fret.

Example 7e



It's possible to organise your harmonic minor lines so that you don't have to deal with the stretch or shift slides, and you'll see a lot of rock players doing things like Example 7f.

Example 7f



You'll see Malmsteen using a pattern like this on songs like *Trilogy*, although here we're playing in C Harmonic Minor.

Example 7g

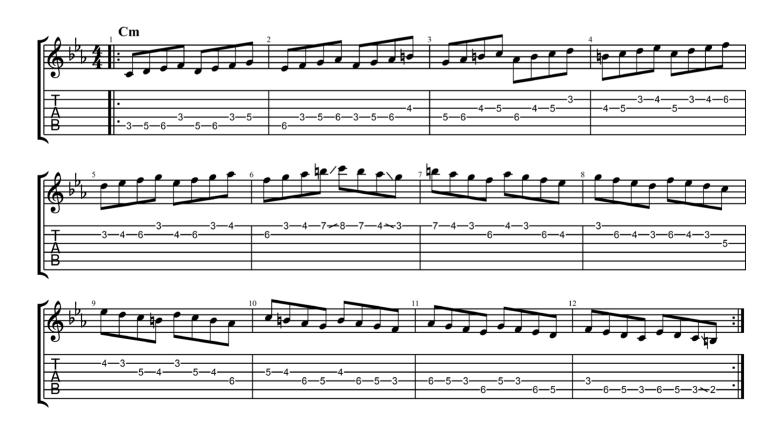


The harmonic minor scale is an interesting little beast, because unlike everything we've covered in these routines so far, we can't play this scale around either of the basic pentatonic patterns.

The 3rd of the major pentatonic clashes with the b3 of the harmonic minor, and the b7 of the minor pentatonic clashes with the natural 7th of the harmonic minor.

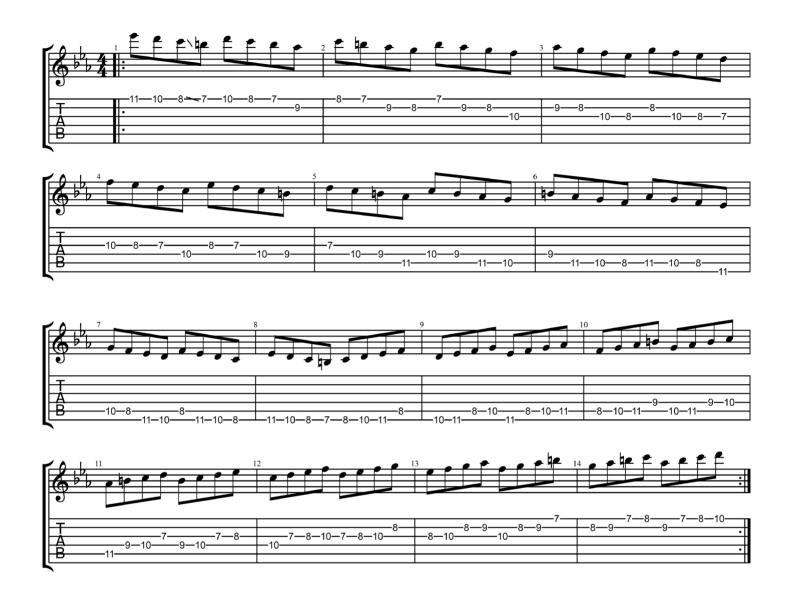
This means there's no great pentatonic solution for the harmonic minor scale, so it demands that we put time into learning sequences. For example, here's a pattern of "4s" played ascending and descending.

Example 7h



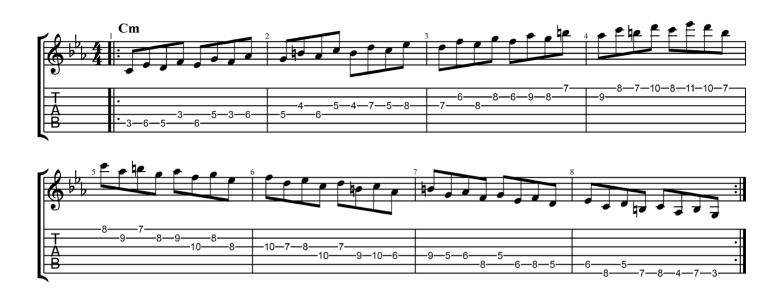
How about applying the same sequence, but now descending then ascending.

Example 7i



Now I want to take our 3rds pattern, work it up and along the neck, and then down again. Once again, real mastery of a scale is being able to *hear it*, not just knowing where to put your fingers because you've played patterns over and over.

Example 7j

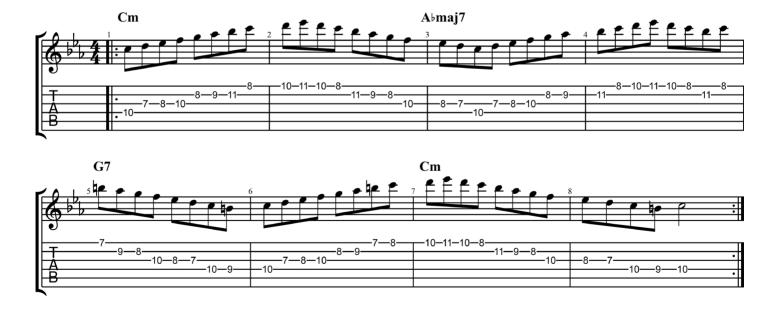


For our last few exercises, I want us to look the first steps of actually using the harmonic minor scale in chord progressions. This will force us to practice switching into and out of this new sound.

As mentioned, the first place we'll tend to use the harmonic minor is over a V-I sequence in a minor key. For a progression that goes Cm-Abmaj7-G7-Cm, the C Natural Minor scale will work great over the Cm and Abmaj7 chords, but over the G7 we really want to be playing C Harmonic Minor.

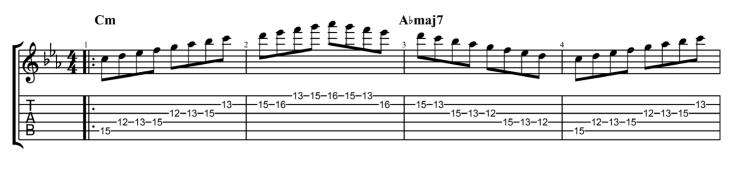
Here's a simple scalic approach over those chords.

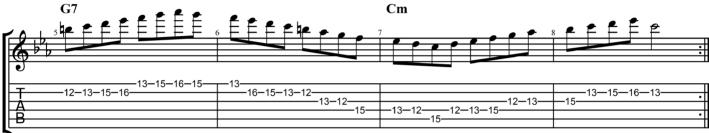
Example 7k



Of course, we can do this anywhere on the neck.

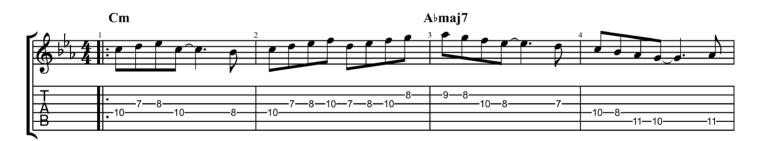
Example 71

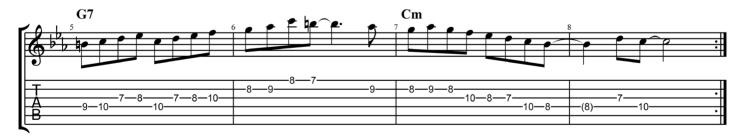




But not all melodies are just runs of 1/8th notes, so here's a little melody using some scale patterns over that progression.

Example 7m





Some of you might be wondering exactly why C Harmonic Minor works over G7. We'll look at this in more detail next week. In the meantime, spend your time playing nothing but harmonic minor. Remember, there are no new intervals here! You already know them – we're just applying them in a specific way.

See you then!

Routine Seven - Phrygian Dominant

When planning a 10-week course on scales, the idea of it being completely comprehensive went out of the window quite quickly. For starters, the major scale has seven modes, so why have we only learned four of them? And the harmonic minor also has seven modes, right?!

Here's the logic behind the approach:

First, if you really know your intervals and understand the ingredients of each scale, I should be able to give you the recipe to *any* scale you don't know yet, and you'll find it much easier to pick up. Second, the other three scales of the major scale (Phrygian, Lydian and Locrian) aren't as useful to us in day-to-day playing as the scales we've covered.

Trying to cover everything gets messy real quick, so my aim here is to save you putting in countless hours working on things you'll never need.

I've been a full-time musical educator for about 15 years, and I can't recall a time where I've used any of the modes of the harmonic minor scale except for the one we're about to cover in this chapter!

The phrygian dominant is the fifth mode of the harmonic minor scale. In the previous chapter, I mentioned that the V chord of the harmonic minor is a dominant 7 (as opposed to the minor 7 of the natural minor). The mode associated with that dominant 7 chord is the most important harmonic minor mode to know – arguably more important than the parent scale!

The phrygian dominant consists of the following intervals:

1, b, 2, 3, 4, 5, b6, b7

In the key of C, that is:

C, Db, E, F, G, Ab, Bb

The phrygian dominant scale is really the phrygian mode of the major scale (mode three) with a natural 3rd instead of a b3. It has all the important notes of a dominant 7 chord (1, 3, 5, b7) but with much darker b2 and b6 intervals that you won't find in the Mixolydian mode.

Let's start by comparing C Mixolydian to C Phrygian Dominant over a C7 chord.

Example 8a





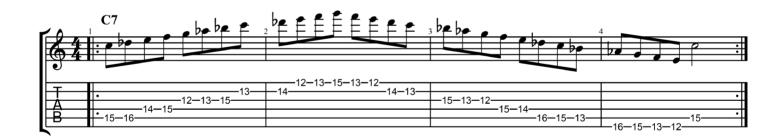
As with every other scale in this book, we need to be able to play it anywhere on the neck, so here's C Phrygian Dominant around the 3rd fret.

Example 8b



Here's the same scale, now played up at the 15th fret.

Example 8c



Let's jump back to a concept we looked at back in our Mixolydian routine and see how we can apply "cells" to this scale to create melodic information.

For Mixolydian, we learned that if we start on the root note we can always play:

1 2 3 5 or 1 b7 6 5 cellular patterns.

Would that approach work here if we just changed those intervals to fit the scale? I.e.,

1 b2 3 5 and 1 b7 b6 5

Absolutely!

Here's a selection of those cells applied to a static C7 chord. You'll notice that due to the three-fret gap between the b2 and 3rd, we never play those on the same string. Work smarter, not harder!

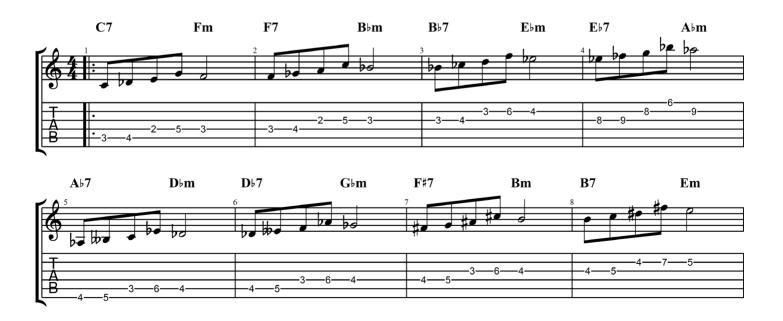
Example 8d



Of course, dominant chords are at their best when they're resolving! So now, we need to resolve the C7 chord to F minor. We can do this by playing either of these cells then moving down a tone to hit that chord change.

Once we know how to do this for a C7 chord, we can take the idea around the Cycle of Fourths. Let's do that now. We'll begin by resolving C7 to Fm, then F7 to Bbm, then B7 to Ebm, and so on. Here is that exercise using an ascending cell.

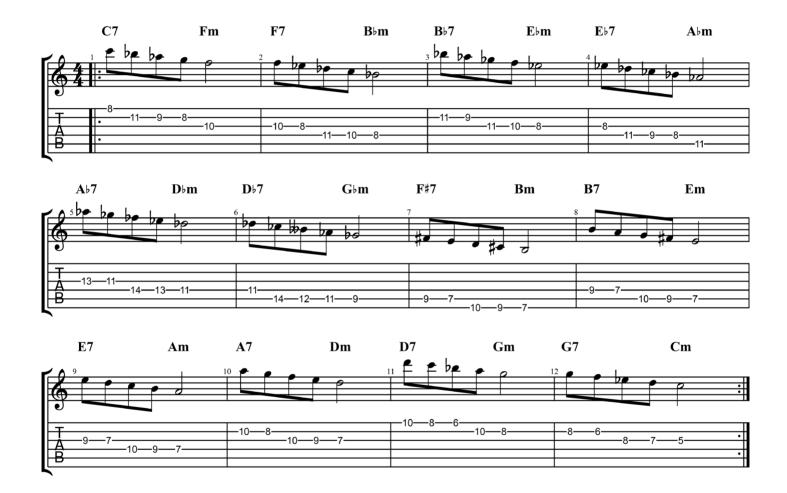
Example 8e





Here's the same progression, but now using the descending cell.

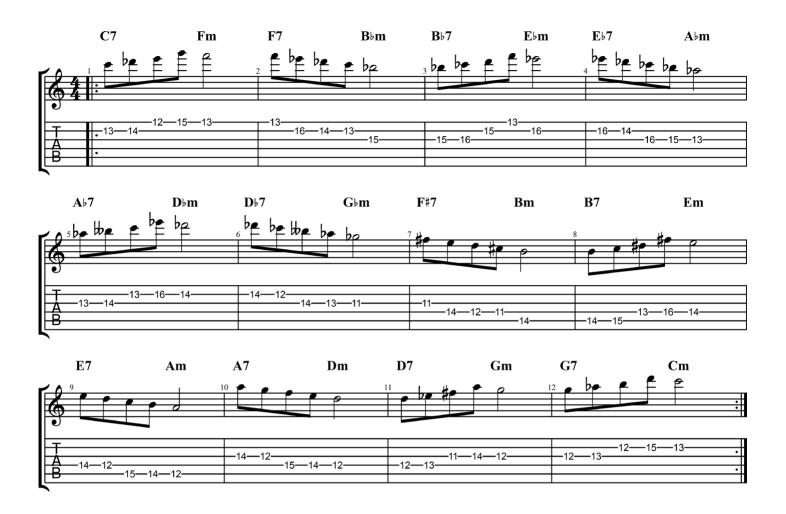
Example 8f



Remember, while you can learn this as a series of places to put your fingers, the real skill is in developing a sense of melodic anticipation with your ears. You should be able to hear the melody you want to play before you play it. And when you've got it clear in your mind, close your eyes and see if your fingers can follow.

Here's the same progression, now combining ascending and descending cells.

Example 8g

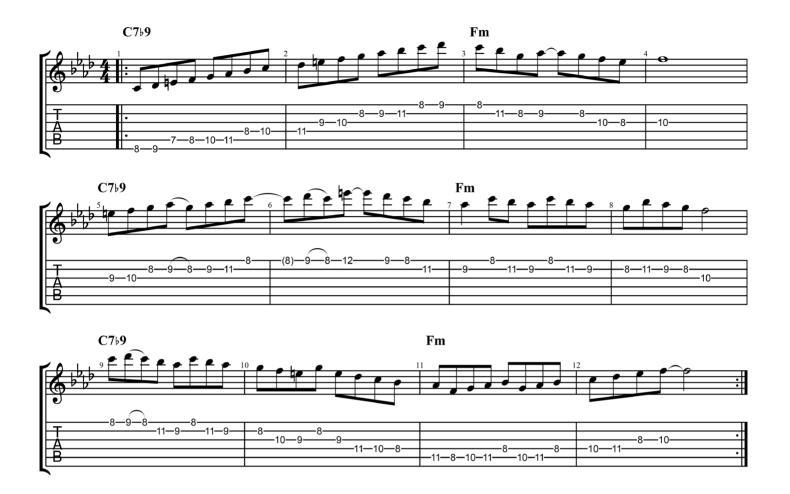


It's easy to work with a scale like the phrygian dominant and come up with melodies over static dominant vamps, because it naturally lends itself to that context. But we also need to work on developing melodic ideas that resolve the phrygian dominant scale over a dominant 7 chord, to the natural minor scale over a minor 7.

Let's look at some longer melodic examples using our scale patterns that do just that, using the progression C7b9 – Fm.

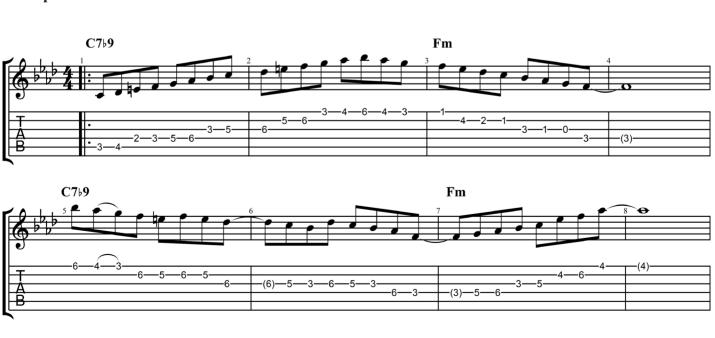
This example uses the first scale pattern we learned and plays a long scalic passage to begin with, then breaks up the pattern with more melodic ideas.

Example 8h



Here's the same idea but played around the 3rd fret area.

Example 8i

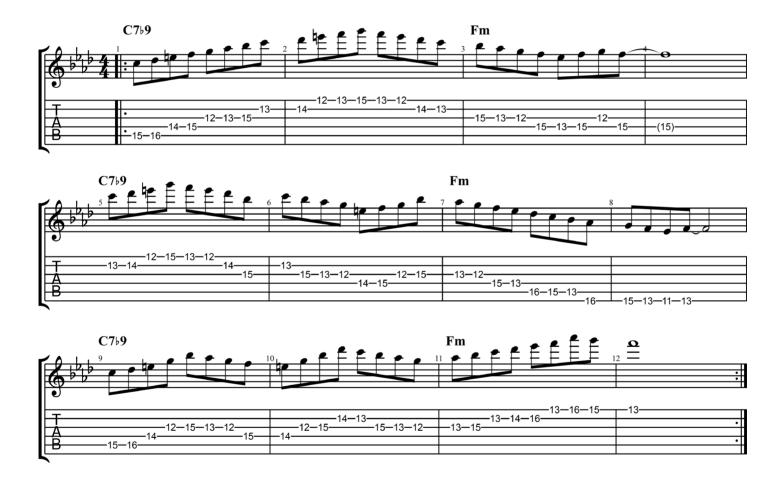




Finally, three more examples up at the 15th fret.

These examples are just ideas to get you inspired. Learn them, but then work on some of your own. The skill here is training your brain to play one scale while looking for the next one.

Example 8j



A cool little offshoot of phrygian dominant is the double harmonic major scale (sometimes known as the Byzantine or gypsy major scale). This is created by starting with the phrygian dominant scale then raising the b7 to a natural 7. It has the formula,

1, b2, 3, 4, 5, b6, 7

Example 8k



What a cool sound! This is the first time we've seen a scale that contains three consecutive semitone jumps. While the fingerings for this might not be all that easy to play physically, you should be at a point in your studies where they make sense.

Example 81



I'm won't write out every position for this scale, because based on the knowledge you now have, you should understand it. I.e., use the phrygian dominant scale, but play a 7th instead of a b7.

If we apply a sequence pattern such as 3rds to this, it creates some cool stuff that travels along the neck.

Example 8m



Spend some time getting familiar with these exotic sounding scales. Later, we'll come back and look at smoothing out that eastern sounding tone and a half gap found in the scale.

Routine Eight – Melodic Minor

If you asked me, "Levi, what's your favourite scale" I would, without hesitation, tell you it's the melodic minor scale. To me, there's a sense of beauty found in this scale that is mysterious enough to make it interesting, without veering too far away from the major scale harmony people expect to hear.

So, what's melodic minor? Interval-wise, it has the formula,

1, 2, b3, 4, 5, 6, 7

You could say, so it's a major scale but with a b3, right? Well, yes... but not really.

The theory books will tell you that the harmonic minor scale is a natural minor with a raised 7th, and the melodic minor is a natural minor with a raised 6th and 7th.

It's a minor sound, so it makes sense to compare it to the minor scale. But, at the same time, it's the minor scale with *two* changes, when we could view it as a major scale with *one*, so I can see why some people prefer that approach.

However, I have a better method of thinking about this scale. In musical application, we don't use the melodic minor in the same context as the natural minor – it's nearly always used as a substitute for the Dorian mode. So, literally anytime I would naturally play Dorian, I'll also play melodic minor.

Viewed from a Dorian perspective, the melodic minor scale is the Dorian mode with a natural 7th rather than a b7.

This is absolutely the way to think about it. Not only does it require a minimal change to something you already know, it's suited for the exact same musical context.

So what does it sound like? Here's the scale played around the 8th fret.

Example 9a



One thing people will love to tell you about the melodic minor (which is a sign they've read a lot of books but not played much music!) is that it is played this way when ascending, but you're supposed to switch to the natural minor when descending.

This is rubbish for a couple of reasons.

It's the done thing when practicing scales in a classical music context, but we're not using it to play classical music, and we're not just playing ascending and descending scale passages.

The classical thought process is that the melodic minor doesn't sound minor when descending until we reach the b3. However, we want to celebrate its unique sound, not avoid it!

Jazz musicians play this scale the same ascending and descending (it's often referred to as the "jazz minor") and I promise you, out there in the real world, nobody plays this scale differently on the way down.

Here's another C Melodic Minor fingering, lower on the neck.

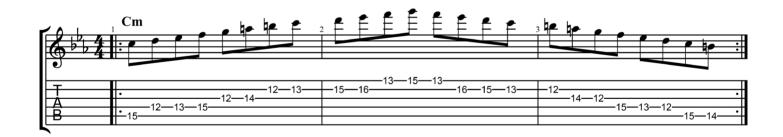
Example 9b



The melodic minor is smoother than the harmonic minor in its execution as it doesn't contain that big interval jump in the scale.

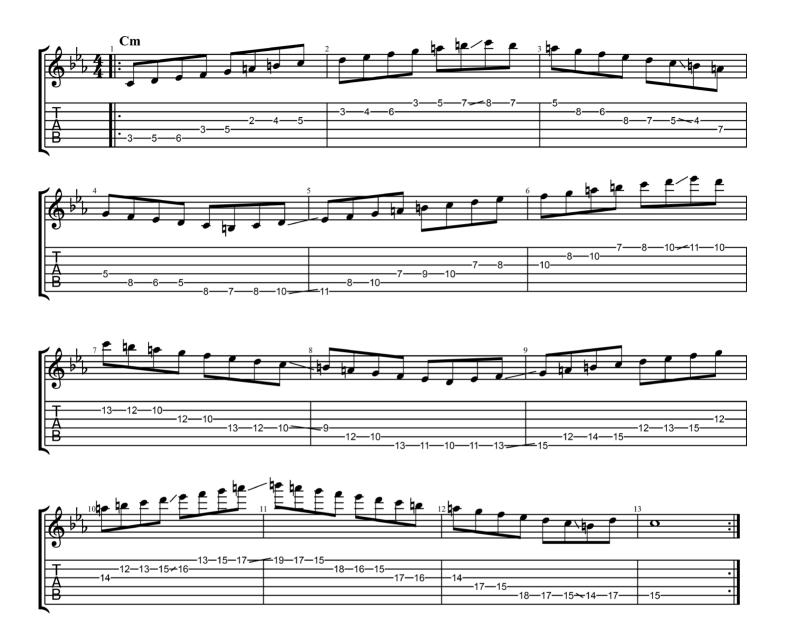
What's fun about this scale is the whole tone scale flavour that comes from its consecutive whole steps between the b3, 4th, 5th 6th and 7th intervals. That's four whole tones in a row, which sounds pretty mysterious!

Example 9c



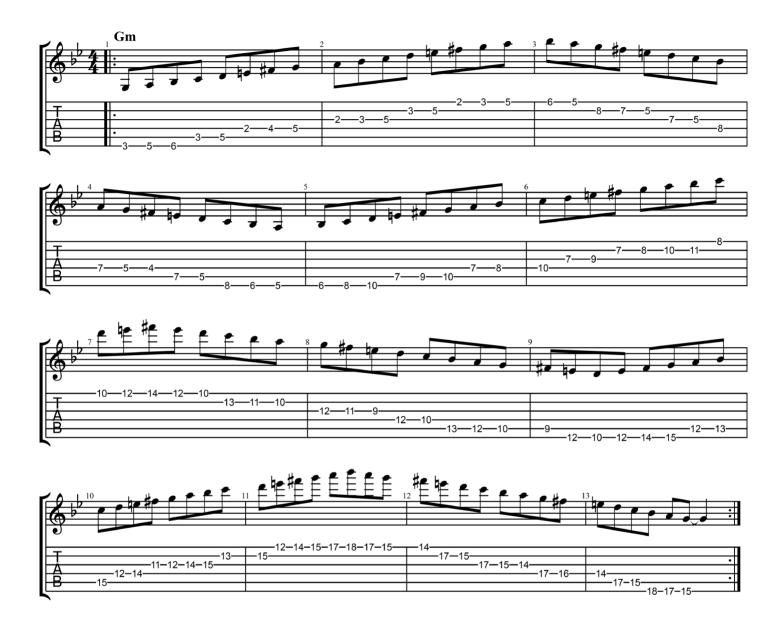
Next, here is C Melodic Minor played in five positions, starting down at the 3rd fret. We need these patterns to be completely automatic. I've added shift slides in the TAB to help you see how I'm moving between positions.

Example 9d



Here's the same idea, but now applied to the G Melodic Minor scale.

Example 9e

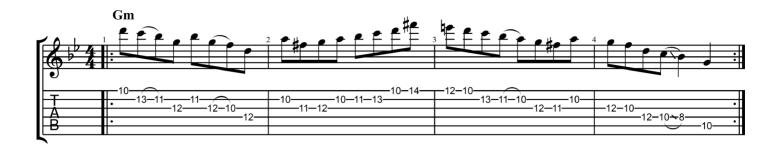


While it's true that, technically, there are "correct" places to use the melodic minor scale – such as over a min(Maj)7 chord (1, b3, 5, 7) – those musical settings are so few and far between that you'll want to find other places to use the scale. One such obvious place to me is to create a slightly outside sound on a minor 7 chord.

A great way to start learning this sound is to combine the minor pentatonic scale with the melodic minor. The skill we want to develop here is the ability to slip in and out of the melodic minor very smoothly.

Here's an example of that.

Example 9f



And here's another, again playing some minor pentatonic ideas then slipping into melodic minor and returning to the minor pentatonic to end.

Example 9g



We should be able to do this anywhere on the neck. For example, here's an idea at the 3rd fret.

Example 9h



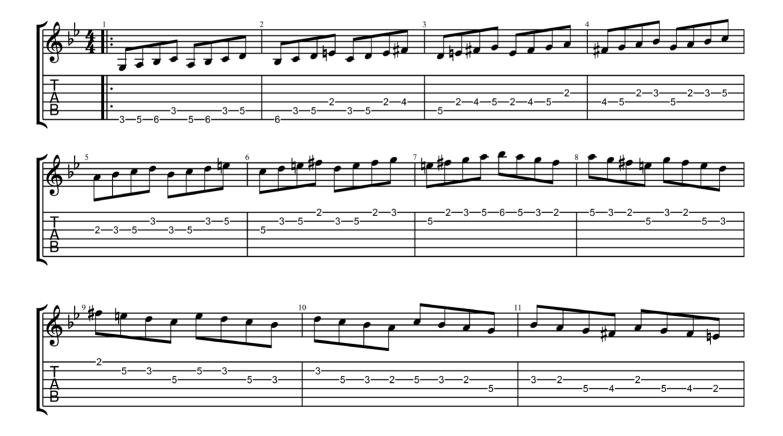
The only way to learn how to slip in and out of the melodic minor and play something cool, is to first have a bunch of scale sequence ideas up your sleeve. Let's look at a couple now, beginning with 3rds.

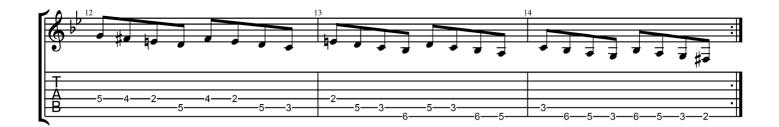
Example 9i



And now in groupings of four notes.

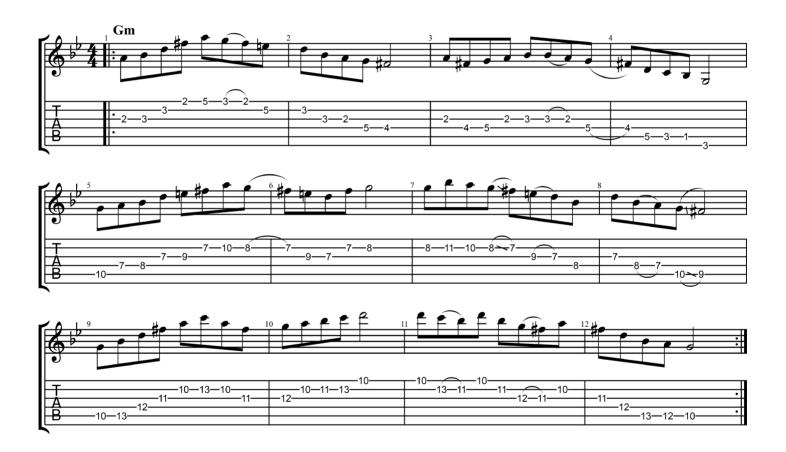
Example 9j





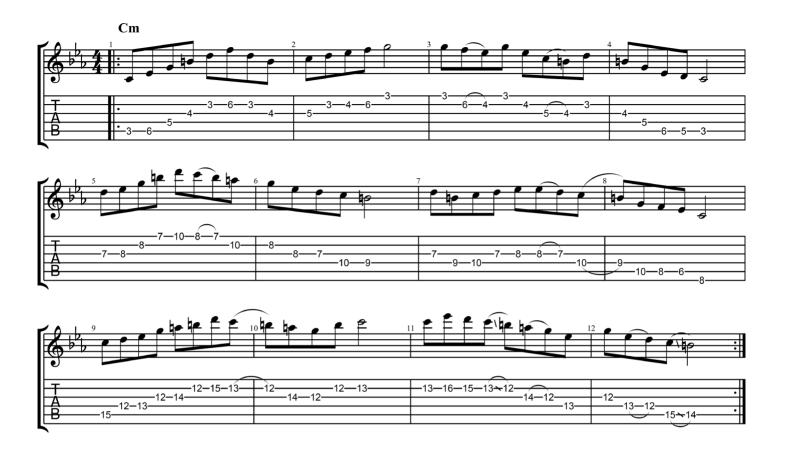
While I now expect you to work on these ideas in as many positions as possible, I also want this chapter to be the one where we start breaking up scales into less predictable patterns. So, while it might be nice to be able to calculate what you're going to practice, here's an etude in G Melodic Minor that relies more on physical patterns than mathematical ones.

Example 9k



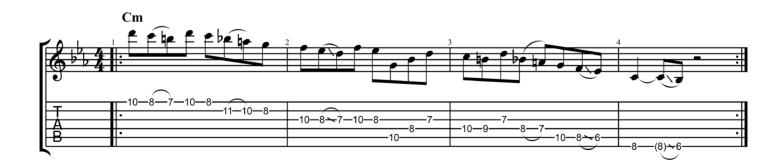
These ideas can be played in any of our twelve keys. If you can see the scale positions, you should be able to see the same licks. Here they are in C Melodic Minor.

Example 91



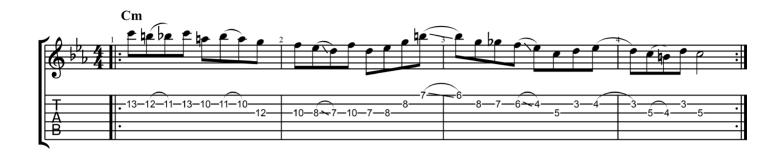
As a final idea, I want you to see just how much the melodic minor and Dorian sounds coexist in musical context. It's totally OK to use some of the melodic minor flavour (with that natural 7th) then slip back into Dorian.

Example 9m



Or you can play something like this.

Example 9n



Take your time with all these patterns because next time we'll look at the important modes of the melodic minor scale – and there are a few of them!

Routine Nine – Melodic Minor Modes

Like any seven-note scale, the melodic minor scale has seven modes:

- Melodic Minor
- Dorian b2
- Lydian Augmented
- Lydian Dominant
- Mixolydian b6
- Locrian Natural 2
- Super Locrian

Your personal mileage may vary with these, depending on the contexts you play in, but I use *five* of these quite regularly.

We've already covered the parent, melodic minor. The others I use regularly are:

Lydian dominant – a Mixolydian mode (i.e. dominant) but with a #4 (giving it a Lydian quality). This is a great sound on a dominant 7 chord.

Mixolydian b6 – as the name suggests, it's a Mixolydian mode with a b6, which creates a cool, yearning sound over a dominant chord

Locrian Natural 2 – once again, as the name suggests, it's a Locrian mode with a natural 2nd rather than a b2. This adjustment makes it a much more practical sound to play over minor 7b5 chords than Locrian. The natural 2nd is a much more pleasing sound than the b2.

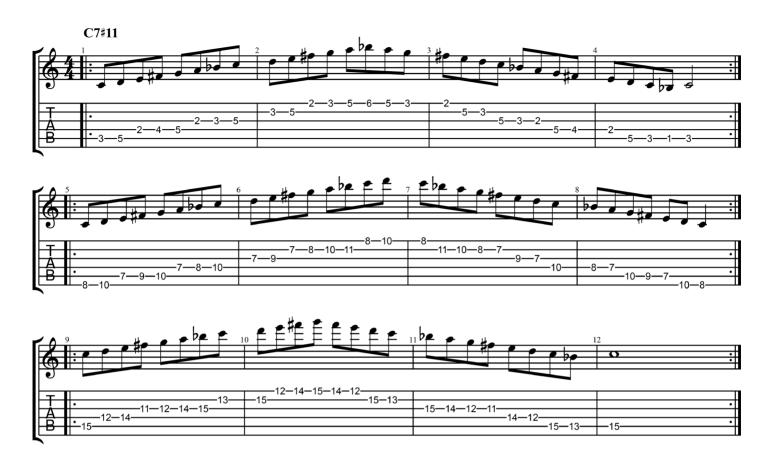
Super Locrian – also known as the altered scale, this is a catch-all scale for dominant 7 chords with jazzy altered tensions (b5, #5, b9, #9).

It was when I was learning the melodic minor modes that the whole interval thing began to click for me. At first, I tried to learn a bunch of new shapes and that was hard work. When I focused on them as things I already knew, but containing a different note, that was the key to nailing the sound of the new mode.

Let's look at these five modes in order, starting with the Lydian dominant. It has the formula:

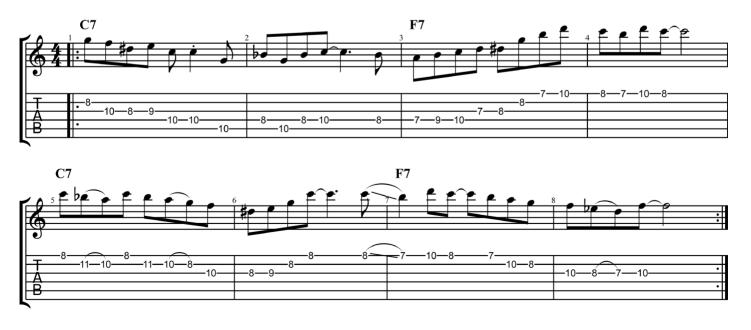
Here it is played from a fifth string root.

Example 10a



Let's look at a common context for this scale. You'll hear players like Robben Ford use it over the IV chord in a blues. If we play just C7 to F7, and use C Mixolydian over the C7, then switch to F Lydian Dominant for the F7 chord, you'll immediately hear how ear catching the #11 is over F7.

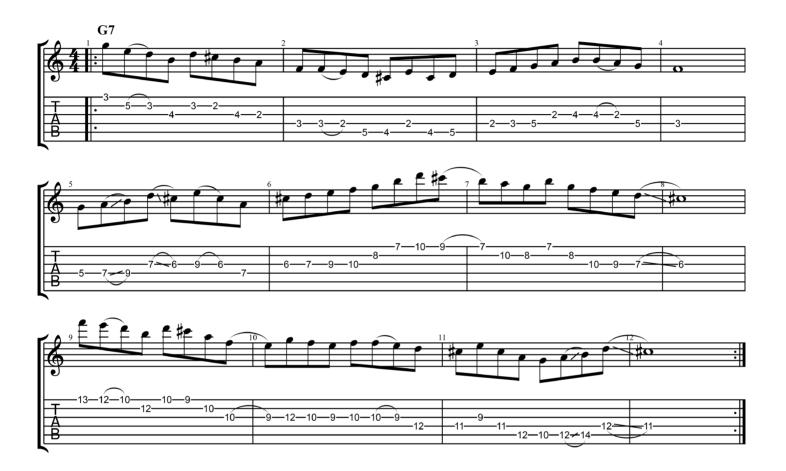
Example 10b



Alternatively, you can use the Lydian dominant scale when playing over extended dominant 7 chords to add a bit of intrigue to your lines.

Here's a short etude using G Lydian Dominant that shows how I like to put lines together from this scale. In my practice, I make an effort to set up a chord loop for a short period and just see what happens. The more I do this, the less I think about it.

Example 10c



Next, let's look at Mixolydian b6. As the name suggests, this scale's formula is 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, b6, b7. Here's how it sounds over C7.

Example 10d



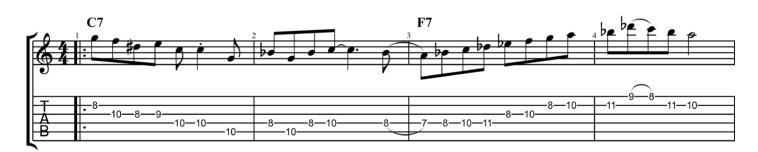


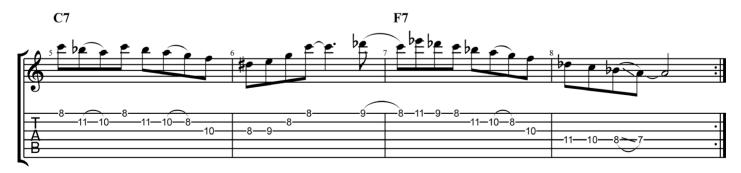


Isn't it wild that both of these modes are sounds that work over dominant chords, yet they have dramatically different vibes?

We can attempt to use this scale in a blues, though I don't really like this sound. To me, the Mixolydian b6 sounds like a minor scale due to its b6 and b7, but with a major 3rd. That's a bit of a juxtaposition, and not quite what we expect to hear over a blues, but it's still a good exercise! Here, we're using the same licks for C7, then plugging in the F Mixolydian b6 mode over the F7 chord.

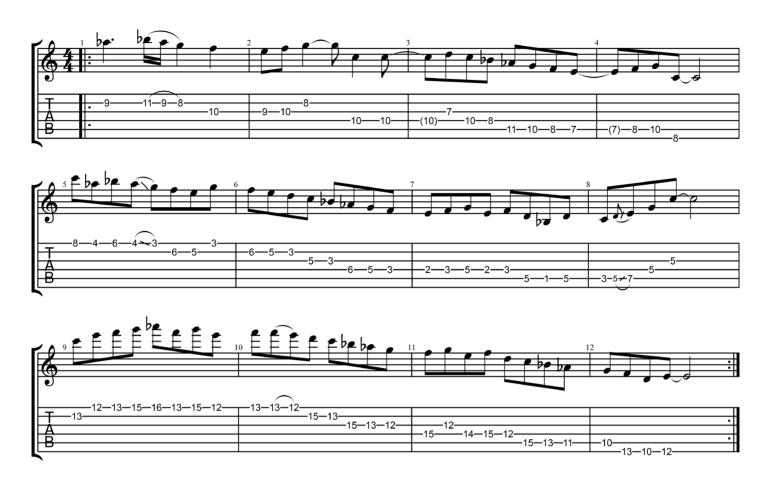
Example 10e





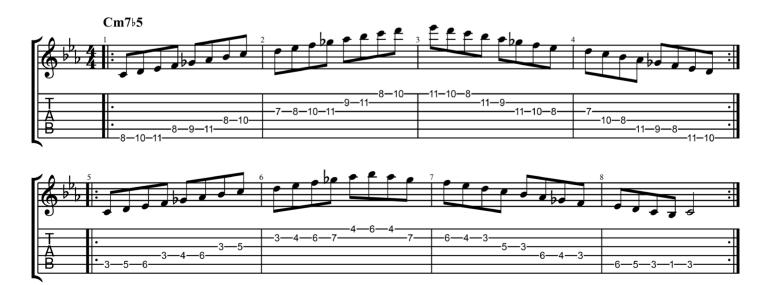
Here's a longer etude showing how beautiful this scale sounds in a static Mixolydian b6 setting.

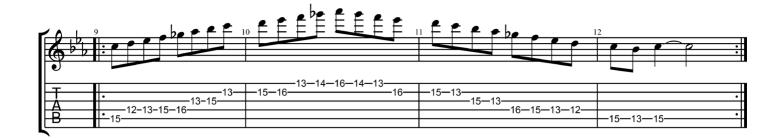
Example 10f



Next up is Locrian Natural 2 (sometimes called Aeolian b5). As the name suggests, we have a formula of 1, 2, b3, 4, b5, b6, b7. Here's the scale played around the neck.

Example 10g

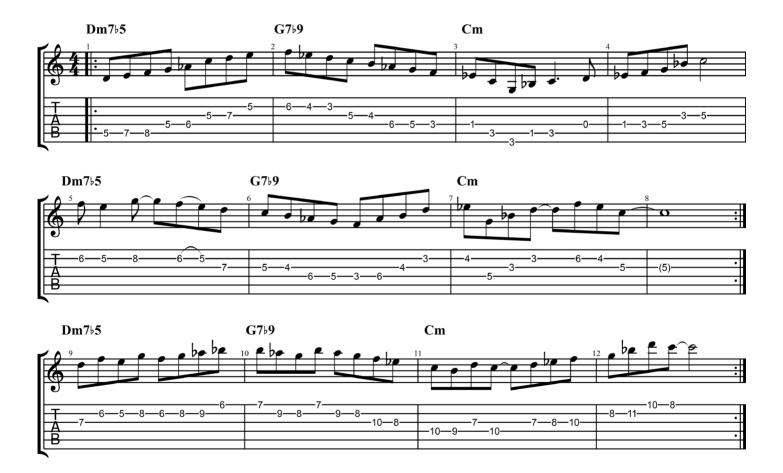




You might listen to this and wonder why this scale is so useful to us. Admittedly, it's a little more jazz, but it's still useful! The minor 7b5 chord is part of the major scale, built from its 7th degree, but playing the associated Locrian scale over it always sounds a little dull, mainly because of the Locrian's b2 interval. With this mode, suddenly we have a pleasing sounding natural 2nd which is much more stable.

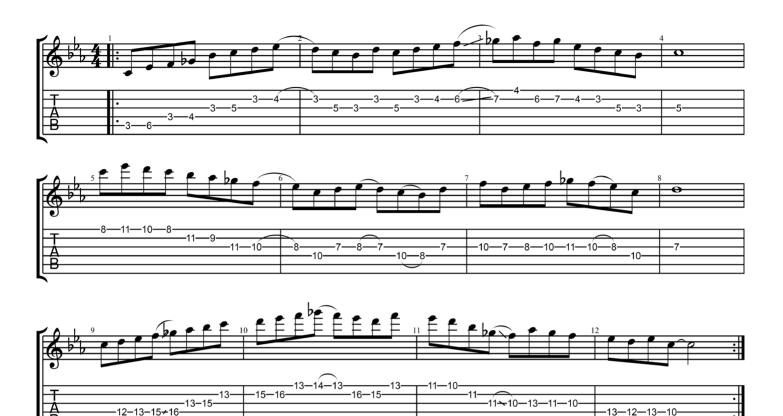
In this example, using the chord progression Dm7b5 – G7b9 – Cm, we are linking together D Locrian Natural 2, G Phrygian Dominant, and C Minor sales.

Example 10h



Now let's play a slightly longer etude that explores just the Locrian Natural sound.

Example 10i



Thus far, when looking at the melodic minor modes, we've only considered them from a parallel, rather than derivative, standpoint, and that is how I tend to approach them. In other words, when I see a C7 chord and want to play C Lydian Dominant over it, I'm not thinking "G Melodic Minor". Similarly, when playing C Mixolydian b6, I'm not thinking F Melodic Minor, or Eb Melodic Minor when I want to access C Locrian Natural 2.

The Super Locrian mode is the exception to this rule.

Super Locrian consists of the following intervals:

1, b2, b3, b4, b5, b6, b7

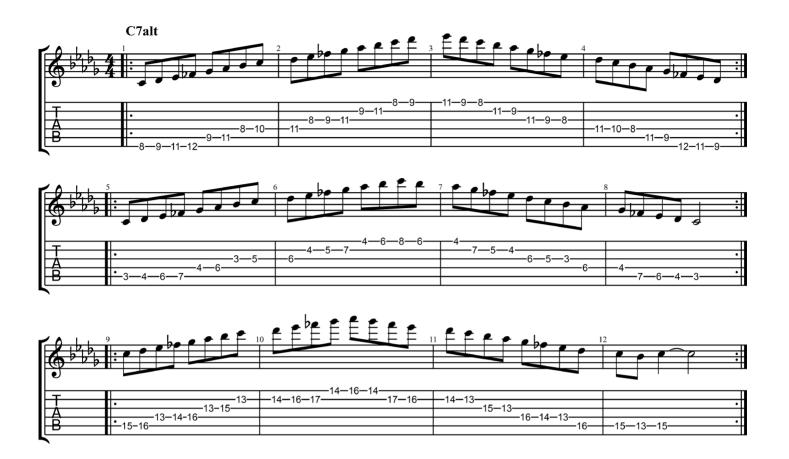
These intervals can also be viewed as:

1, b2, #2, 3, b5, #5, b7

In other words, a dominant 7 chord shell and all the possible alterations that can be made to it.

If you want, you can *try* and think of these intervals and visualise them, but I've always found this particularly nightmarish compared to the common hack used to access this scale: just play the melodic minor scale up a semitone from the root of the dominant 7 chord. In other words, to play C Super Locrian over a C7alt chord, we play Db Melodic Minor.

Example 10j



Super Locrian might be the most important mode of melodic minor, as it's the go-to sound for adding tension to functioning dominant chords (i.e., chords that resolve to a tonic chord).

In order to really practice this scale, ensure that you focus on how each pattern resolves up a 4th to the I chord.

So...

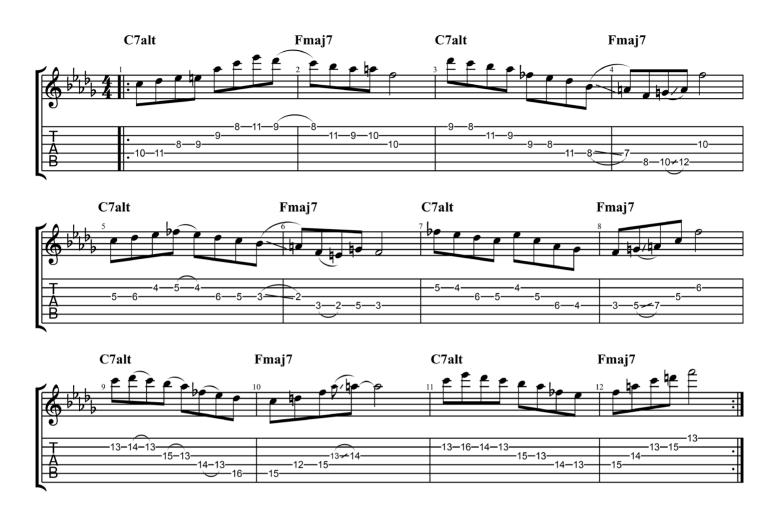
C Super Locrian always resolves to F Major.

F Super Locrian always resolves to Bb Major.

Bb Super Locrian always resolves to Eb Major, and so on.

In this exercise we practice that movement going from C7alt to Fmaj7.

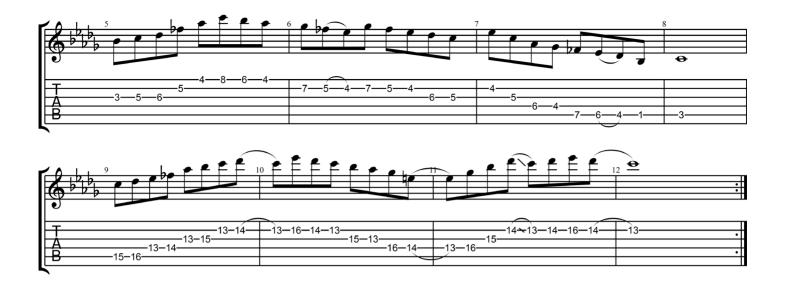
Example 10k



And here's an extended C7alt vamp where we're playing longer lines, staying in that Super Locrian sound. Even though our ears expect this to resolve, I still think it sounds cool!

Example 10l





Again, we're just scratching the surface of these modes and what we can do with them musically. You can explore them more on your own, but for now, our focus is still upon how quickly we can put these sounds together and play them. Are you seeing them as new patterns that you need to learn, or are you viewing them as intervals and beginning to see them as variations of scales you already know?

Get to work and I'll see you in a week!

Routine Ten - Chromatic Scale

Many years ago, when I was just a teen with a dream of music, I was obsessed with knowledge. I needed to know as much as I could! Because then I'd have it all figured out, right? I was part of a great little online community that had some really accomplished players who were generous with their time for us up-and-comers. I still vividly remember one particular conversation I had with one of those guys. It went like this:

[Me] "So, what scales are you using over this chord... and this chord... and when this happens, are you thinking like *this* or like *this*... and how do you work out how to play melodies and what the right notes are?"

[Him] "You know there's only one scale, right? The Chromatic scale."

At the time I considered this to be bad advice because I took it very literally. As good a player as he was, surely he didn't just think in terms of chromatic scales?

As time has gone on, I've come to understand what he was trying to tell me, and now I want to pass that on to you.

First, stop thinking so much! Music isn't science and you can't calculate everything. Music is art. Focus more on the music and less on musical strategies and you'll get better at music.

Second, there are only 12 notes (or intervals) in our Western tonal system of music. If you are in control of those 12 notes, then you've got access to all your sounds.

The chromatic scale gets its name from the Latin word *chroma*, which in turn came from the original Greek word *khrōma*, meaning "colour". We can therefore think of the chromatic scale as the scale of "all colours".

Because of the tuning of the guitar, there are fundamentally two practical ways to lay out the chromatic scale on the guitar. First, as a pattern that moves down the neck as we cross strings.

Example 11a



And we can also stay in position by including shift slides on strings that are tuned a 4th apart from each other.

Example 11b

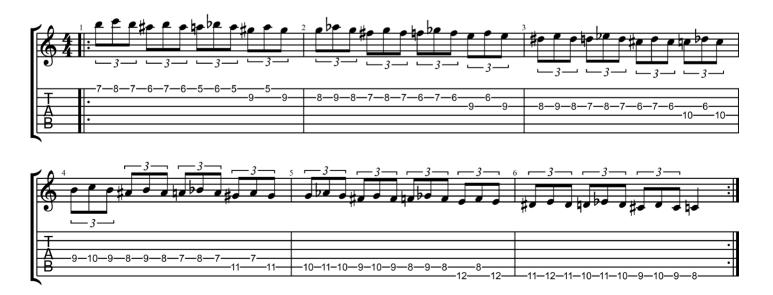


The nature of the chromatic scale makes it pointless to play the kinds of sequences we've used on previous scales. Playing in 3rds or using ascending "4s" doesn't achieve much. Instead, we can use it to work on improving our dexterity, as this descending triplet idea shows.

It might seem easier to try and play most of this with two fingers, but we're going to use a specific fingering to give the fretting hand a workout.

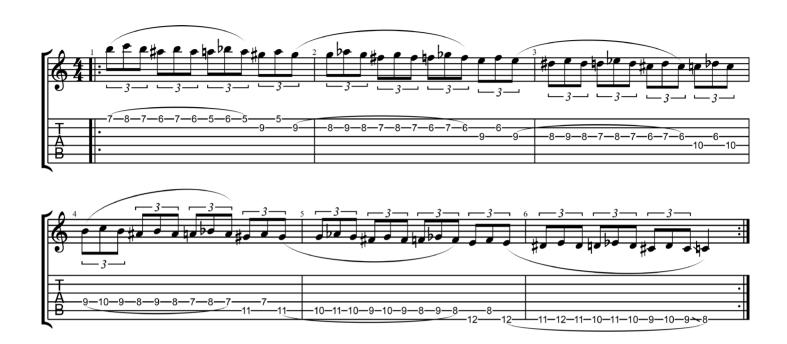
In each bar, play the first group of three notes with the third and fourth fingers, the second group with the second and third fingers, the third group with the first and second fingers, and the last group with the fourth and first fingers.

Example 11c



You can really give yourself a test if you take that same pattern but now play it legato, picking just the first note of each long single-string group.

Example 11d



My first lightbulb moment with chromatics was a pretty simple one, and came when I saw John Petrucci fill in the blanks of a minor pentatonic scale.

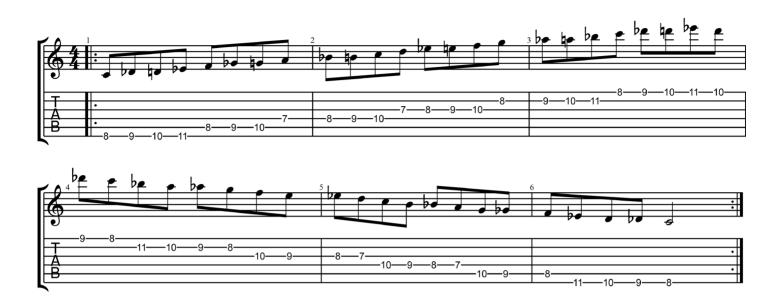
This exercise uses a C Minor Pentatonic framework, but we're connecting up each of the notes with chromatic notes.

Example 11e



We can apply the same idea, but this time thinking C Dorian, which might look like this.

Example 11f



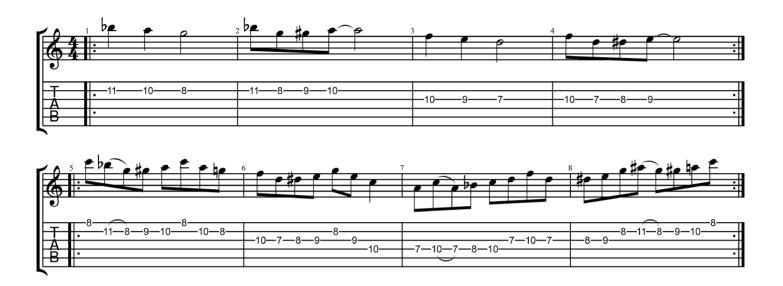
Of course, this is an idea that needs to be developed to become more musical. There's a huge difference between playing a scale connected with chromatic notes and playing actual melodic lines. So here are two lines based around a C Dorian/melodic minor framework, with some chromatic ideas thrown in to add colour and make things sound more interesting.

Example 11g



The more I've studied the playing of the great jazz improvisers, the more I've seen similar patterns coming up again and again. As guitarists, any time we play the following pattern on a string, we can turn it into a chromatic idea.

Example 11h



This will be true no matter what position we play in, as shown here, this time using C Mixolydian at the 3rd fret.

Example 11i



Or up at the 12th fret area.

Example 11j



We're going to finish this routine with some chromatic examples played over one of my favourite chord sequences: the bridge of the "rhythm changes" progression. This is taken from the tune *I Got Rhythm* by George Gershwin, a popular jazz standard that he wrote for the musical *Girl Crazy*. While this song is still played a fair amount in its own right, its chord changes were so popular with jazz musicians that many *contrafacts* were written using them (i.e., a new melody written over the harmony borrowed from another song).

Songs based on *I Got Rhythm* are so common they're now just referred to as Rhythm Changes tunes, and some of the best include,

- Rhythm-A-Ning
- Oleo
- Lester Leaps In
- Cotton Tail
- Moose The Mooche
- Straighten Up and Fly Right

The A section of the rhythm changes has lots of fast moving chord changes that can be a real challenge to solo over, but the B section consists of a series of static dominant chords moving through the Circle of 4ths:

The rhythm changes are nearly always played in Bb Major and the bridge begins with the III7 chord (D7) then cycles down to F7, the V chord that resolves back to Bbmaj7.

Working on this part of the tune allows us to stretch out with some of our dominant 7 vocabulary, while adding chromatic embellishments.

Here's a simple idea using chromatics over those changes. In order to make things a little easier, I've stayed on the last note of each chord for two beats to give you time to think about where you're going next.

Example 11k



Things begin to flow much better if we connect our chords more.

Example 111



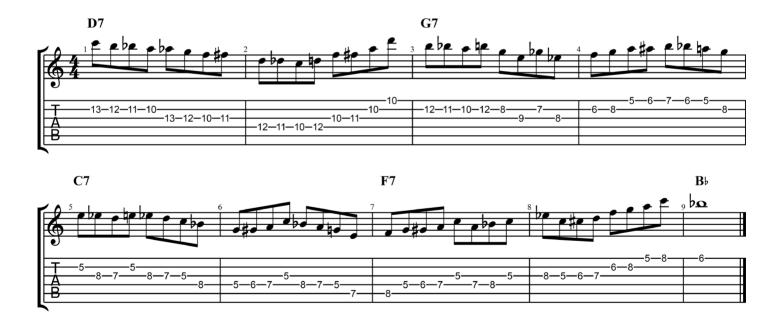
Here's another exercise to challenge yourself!

Example 11m



And here's one final run at it to see just how many chromatics we can throw in there.

Example 11n



While we can play the chromatic scale as a scale in its own right, the best way to view it is as a source of non-diatonic notes we can draw on when improvising. Chromatic notes are just "colours" that live next to the notes you usually play. The deeper you dig into this concept, the more you'll begin to develop a unique voice as a player. So, get to work and go experiment with these ideas!

Conclusion

And there we have it! We've done ten weeks of practice getting to grips with scales, and we've focused on developing a deeper understanding of intervals – the ingredients that make up every scale. But there are still many months of work ahead, as you take these ideas and develop them further!

No matter what place you were at when you began this course, I hope you've learned a lot more about scales, including how best to practice them, all the while simplifying the process of understanding and constructing new scales.

Now that you have a solid method for building a scale and identifying/comparing its intervals, you should be able to learn new scales much more easily.

The Whole Tone scale? 1, 2, 3, #4, #5, b7. Easy!

Harmonic Major? 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, b6, 7. Easy!

Half-Whole Diminished? 1, b2, b3, 3, b5, 5, 6, b7. Easy!

When you come to work on the books that will follow on from this one (chords, then arpeggios), you'll already be armed with most of the skills you need to make them feel as effortless as possible.

We have covered a LOT of different ideas in this book: scale construction, patterns, sequences, chord progressions, limitation exercises, etc. Don't be afraid to go back, take one idea at a time, and thoroughly explore and apply it.

Once you understand this stuff, applying it is just letting your fingers do the things your brain has already learned. And the more you take the ideas in this book and apply them to other scales you might want to play, the faster you're going to develop as a player.

Get to work and I'll catch you next time!

Good luck,

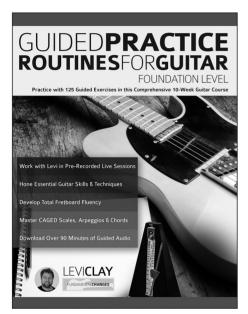
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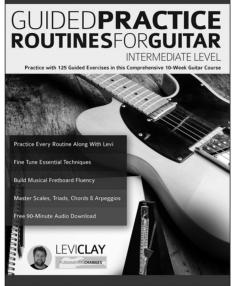
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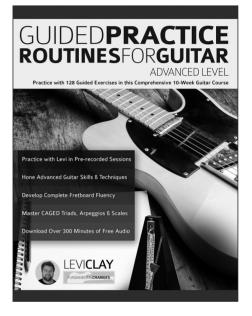
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Embellished CAGED voicings

Articulation & phrasing

Introduction to minor modal scales

Advanced Skills That Mean Business:

Advanced major scale workout

The ultimate triad workout, parts 1, 2, 3, 4 & 5:

[learn multiple triad shapes for all chord types; mix & match voicings; build scales around any triad form; learn guide-tone and rootless voicings; apply open-voiced triads & learn chord melody skills]

Major & minor pentatonic drills

Modal control

Economy & sweep picking